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HEIR TO TWO FORTUNES


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KNOWLEDGE · THE WINGS WHEREWITH WE FLY TO HEAVEN

HEIR TO TWO FORTUNES.

A Novel,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

THE AUTHOR

OF

"THE LIFE OF THE MOSELLE."

VOL. II.



London:
REMINGTON AND CO.,
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1877.

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a bottle and glasses; one of the latter was half full of brandy and water.

It is four o'clock, and Mr. Garston is standing in front of the fire-place; he has just returned from inspecting a property advertised for sale in the neighbourhood. He has his hat still on his head, round it there is the very deepest possible band of crape, and his whole dress gives evidence of his recent loss.

Jane, formerly Miss Jane Herold, is no more, both she and her newly-born daughter are dead, and Mr. Garston is a widower. He certainly felt her death a little, but he received consolation from the fact that this death put him in full possession of her eight thousand pounds to play with,' as he termed speculating; she had died without leaving issue, and had willed all she was possessed of to her dear husband. He had treated her well, and helped himself on by his marriage into the Herold family.

Garston was a pushing man, and had desired to raise his business above the level of farmer's squabbles, paltry cases before magistrates, assize work, and such like matters; he had got a considerable lift by his marriage with Jane; his

brother-in-law, Mr. Wren, had been of assistance, never becoming intimate with him but ready to speak well of one he believed to be an industrious, useful man of business.

As yet Garston had not been able to do much towards putting himself on a level with men like Mr. Fermor, still he had done something. He rode well to hounds, was a good shot, and a pleasant companion; these accomplishments, extra-legal as they were, helped him more than his knowledge of law books. Jane had materially assisted his upward flight in society, but he looked to her eight thousand pounds doing him more good than her social status had effected. He was in a hurry to get on, and eight thousand was a nice sum to play with.

He took a good gulp of his brandy and water and lit a cigar; it was after office hours, so he thought he might indulge himself; not that he never smoked or drank anything during those hours, such things were common enough, even necessary, to obtain or keep up his popularity with many of his clients who were of a class that liked a little stimulant after riding over to see him on business, or to have a chat not exactly business,

but often leading to it. Many of his visitors took great pleasure in getting advice under the guise of accepting a cigar or glass of something, and having a chat over these hospitalities; and Garston found it also suited him not to be too particular in extorting his six and eightpences; a glass or two of sherry often led to future profit. Sherry was also his own drink during office hours, as he considered it more professional than spirits.

Settling himself in his easy chair after taking off his black craped hat, he threw one leg over the chair's arm, took a good pull at the brandy and water, then meditatively puffing his cigar he thought out his position. Passing in review all the circumstances connected with his present life, it was becoming clear to him that however desirable a country practice of good standing was, yet a London life was far superior, he had formerly led such a life, and now he was thinking of its pleasures, when a rap came to the door.

Jerking his leg into a more discreet position, and wondering who was disturbing him in his office after hours, he called to his disturber to "come in."

Whereupon Seton Herold entered, saying—

"They told me you were returned, so I announced myself."

"Very glad to see you. I was thinking to-day that I would ride over to Westerham, to have a chat with you, but I had to go off on business in an opposite direction; what will you take? I was so pumped that I was having a mouthful of cognac and water."

Seton declined refreshment, but at his brother-in-law's solicitation dropped into the arm chair. Our hero had now been back some months, and was getting anxious at nothing being done by Mr. Fermor in settlement of his affairs; he had written to him often, had interviews with him, and always received his earnest assurances that things were all right, only it would not do to hurry matters—all was well, but things would take time. Westerham was still unlet, the mortgage was not realized, and time began to press. Some of his sisters' trustees had given notice that when the year was up they wished to be paid the trust money. Besides, he himself was living on borrowed money; the bankers were very civil, but he did not like the idea of being

under obligations to them. He felt himself in a sort of net of which Mr. Fermor held the strings, and after much cogitation he had made up his mind to talk the whole matter over with Garston. He was not much fonder of that gentleman than he had formerly been, but latterly his animosity had abated; Garston had behaved well to poor Jane, and now she was gone, Seton was quite willing to condone the marriage; besides Garston would be a good adviser in his own interest, as he was anxious to receive the eight thousand pounds, and before he could do that Fermor must be got to arrange the affairs. Seton had tried Wren, but he professed himself utterly unable to give advice in the matter, and thought Fermor was all right; for his part he was in no hurry about Elinor's eight thousand, four per cent. was very good interest, and the security right enough. Sarncombe, when applied to, had merely said—"Pitch into him, Seton, stick to him, and screw it out." This was exactly what he wished to do; he needed no advice of that sort, he wanted to know how to screw it out. Therefore, he now came to Garston, who, himself a lawyer, might be able to combat Mr. Fermor.

"Now what would you do, Garston?" said our hero, after settling himself in the arm chair, and making a few preliminary observations; "I have done all I can think of, and things are just as they were a year ago."

"It is very difficult to advise," said the lawyer, "and upon my soul I hardly know what to say about it; still something ought to be done, and for my part I really shall be very glad to get the portion that comes to me, through poor Jane, paid. In my profession ready money is an immense thing; it is impossible to dun clients who are worth having, and many of them often want a little accommodation, which without capital of your own it is impossible to give, unless, like Fermor, you have a bank at your back. I saw he got a good rap over the knuckles the other day."

"How do you mean?"

"Oh, the Vice-Chancellor hit him pretty hard; I forget the exact words, but it was to the effect that it was not the first time there had been irregularities in the conduct of those affairs. He was alluding to the Holborn Estates, which are always before the Courts in one shape or another."

"But Fermor isn't solicitor for the Estates?"

"He is not officially, but it seems he acted privately for Lord Holborn, and they are all in the swim; Wreckford's and another firm have got it all between them somehow—either they or their nominees are trustees, receivers, solicitors, and all put together in and out. They have had a nice time of it; no chance of such pickings for us poor devils in the country." Here Garston sighed profoundly. "Not but what some of us do pretty well; but you see in London they can muddle up things so much better, and they are not so accessible; why, down here, if a confounded farmer has a little trumpery suit, he keeps on calling and bothering in and out of hours; living where one's office is is the very deuce; confound them, as if all their little savings were worth turning over. Of course we charge him for his interviews, and for reading his letters, but when he has to pay the bill he takes it out of us by going about abusing us, because he was fool enough to go to law. I give you my word, I am sick of their little peddling affairs; I was just thinking so when you came in."

"Do you think Fermor is really doing his best for me, or can he have anything to gain by not arranging my matters?"

"It is very hard to say, these men have so many irons in the fire; but I don't see what object he can have in playing you false. He sticks to it that the mortgage is perfectly safe, doesn't he?"

"Yes."

"Then I don't see why he can't get somebody to take to it; it is five per cent."

"Yes, five per cent., and he always says there is no difficulty, only you can't find a lender with thirty-one thousand pounds every day, and owing to all the bother with the Holborn Estates people are rather afraid to have anything to do with them in any shape."

"That is all humbug; you said it is a first mortgage?"

"So he told me."

"Then I should just let him know that if he could not find any one to take it over by the end of next month you would foreclose. Who are your trustees? It was your mother's money, wasn't it?"

"Yes, my uncle, Colonel Warrington, is one, and I believe Fermor himself is the other."

"Upon my soul I believe he is trustee for everybody. Why, in the case I was speaking about just now, either he or Wreckford was trustee for half-a-dozen people, and the man who is now a partner, Blyte, was so for the rest. What a game they have had of it! Look here, Seton, if I were you I would get out of it as soon as possible; depend on it there is something rotten somewhere. If you can only get this thirty-one thousand squared up, you will be all right, the mortgage on Westerham can go on, and the bankers are not likely to bother you if their interest is paid regularly. Your uncle banks there, too, doesn't he?"

"Yes, I know he does. I think, Garston, you are right, but how shall I manage to make Fermor do what we want? he always talks as if the thing might be completed any day, but nothing ever comes of it. Couldn't you give me a sort of outline of what I had better say when I write to him again?"

"I don't think it would be well to let him know that I have any special finger in the pie,

he might cut up rusty; so only write just as you have been doing, no lawyer work, only put in that your brothers-in-law as well as yourself think the thirty-one thousand ought to be realized and if necessary the mortgage must be foreclosed; that you have the right to do so, and even if it interferes with other interests, still that is not a matter that sufficiently concerns you to prevent you arranging your affairs, which cannot be done without this money lent to Lord Holborn."

"Scribble out something, or I may go wrong."

Thereupon Garston wrote a very careful letter, which he thought would meet the case without betraying that it was written by a lawyer; this he handed to Seton, suggesting that he should, before sending it to Mr. Fermor, communicate with his other brothers-in-law, and ask for their acquiescence in the step he was taking.

"It will give you a better hold on him, you know," he said.

"I am really very much obliged to you, Garston," returned Seton, "I will write to them at once. Suppose you come over and dine with me on Sunday, I shall have heard from them by

then, and we can talk over the matter at our leisure."

Garston accepted the invitation, and the brothers-in-law parted outwardly good friends, but Garston had never forgotten or forgiven Seton's conduct with regard to his marriage with Jane.

In reply to Seton's letters to his brothers-in-law on the above subject, he received the following answers:—

"Wrencourt.

"My Dear Seton—

"As you want a sort of official answer from me as to insisting on the trustees realizing the mortgage on the Holborn Estates, I can only say that, thinking you would like to have a better opinion than I could give you, I have consulted my solicitors, and they advise that the mortgage should be realized, as there are so many different interests connected with the Holborn property.

"I remain, affectionately yours,

"Montague Wren."

The next in order is from Sarncombe, and read as follows:—

"My Dear Seton,—

"Thank God I am no lawyer; it seems pretty clear that Mr. Fermor is inclined to beat about the bush, and I think the sooner you rouse him up the better, not that it is much odds to me so long as the interest is all right; but as you ask my opinion, I should decidedly say make him pay up. I have been told of an uncommonly good thing for the Leger and you can get on at long odds—but I believe you never bet. Harriet sends her best love, and joins me in hoping you will look us up down here; we are getting up a scratch pack and hope to have some fun.

"Ever yours, affectionately,

"George Sarncombe.

"Hottleton Barracks."

Hodges wrote from Slumpton-in-Squash.

"My Dear Seton,—

"Your letter about your dear sister's fortune has just reached me, and such advice as I am able to give is freely yours. It seems desirable that the mortgage should be realized, as although it

bears interest at four per cent., yet, my brother James, who you know is a solicitor, says he can get me four and a half on quite as good a security as that of the Holborn Estates, indeed, he says there are sad rumours about that property and about Mr. Fermor. We should not wish to inconvenience you in any way, but to us, even the little addition which a half per cent. would give will be very welcome, as there are many outgoings here. Dora is now strong again, and both the babies are well; we have much to be thankful for. Jane's death was very sudden; I hope it is not too severely felt by her bereaved husband, and that the loss may eventuate in his happiness hereafter. Should you be in our neighbourhood, we hope you will not forget to visit us, though I fear this country offers few attractions to the possessor of Westerham. With our prayers for your welfare,

Believe me to remain,

My dear Seton,

Yours in all affection,

"THOMAS HODGES."

Seton had also written to his uncle to ask him, as a trustee, whether he did not think it advi-

sable to realize the mortgage; to this he received the following reply:—

"Wellingtonia Lodge.

"My Dear Seton,—

"I hardly know why you have applied to me to give you advice about your mother's money, which has been lent to Lord Holborn on mortgage. Mr. Fermor is in a position to give you much better advice than I can. You know how I dislike all things connected with law; I never went to law but once myself, and then, although I was perfectly in the right, I was so strongly advised to compromise that I paid three thousand pounds to get clear of the suit. Why the deuce Fermor doesn't find the money I don't know; most likely he has some sinister motive, but you can't tell him so. When I was in the Peninsular we used to hang any fellow found plundering, it is a pity we can't do the same in England now-a-days; the Duke would have made short work with some of these fellows. As it seems I am a trustee, the sooner the whole thing is settled and done with the better I shall be pleased. I have never acted except just to sign

what Fermor sent me, and I hate being mixed up in anything of the sort. I have had a touch of gout and been laid up for some days. Waterloo wants riding, I think you called it bucketing.

"Ever your affectionate Uncle,

"CHRISTOPHER WARRINGTON."

It was clear to Seton that all his correspondents were in accord as to the money being obtained, their reasons were various, but their unanimity was marked. It was equally clear to him that he must assume all the responsibility, so he at once wrote to Mr. Fermor as Garston had dictated, and he received from him a reply to the effect that there was some one now treating about the mortgage, that he was quite right to wish to realize it, that he wished the same thing; but hurry was of no use, on the contrary, it might be prejudicial.

Time wore on, the year expired, and nothing was effected.

Then, at the instigation and with the assistance of Garston, another and more peremptory letter was sent to Mr. Fermor, and at last that gentleman consented to foreclose the mortgage and sell

that portion of the Holborn Estates over which they had power. Notice of foreclosure was given.

By this time a certain intimacy had sprung up between Seton and Garston, the latter taking much pains to secure Seton's good will.

CHAPTER II.

PARTLY HISTORICAL, PARTLY DOMESTIC.

MEANWHILE, Guss was again gone to sea, this time with the rank of lieutenant; old Grampus had verified the prediction of Guss's friend, Flinders, and Guss was all right.

The young sailor had struggled manfully against his convictions that Seton had not done quite as he ought about Gladys; he had rated himself for his foolishness in never thinking that Seton might have been beforehand with him in his cousin's affections; he remembered that these two had been together as children, and that Seton had often spoken of her very affectionately. He usually wound up these reflections by mentally, nay, frequently by verbally imprecating poor Maria, now Mrs. Robert Hustler.

Before Guss left England, Seton made a formal declaration of his love for Gladys to Aunt Mary, and that lady had given her consent to their union at some distant day.

The distant day was an express stipulation, as Mrs. Tarleton thought Gladys far too young to be married; indeed the old lady was much put out by the reversement of her wishes. Gladys would have done so well for Guss, and made such a daughter for her in her old age. She could not bear the idea of handing over her keys to a stranger, even to Gladys it would have been a wrench, but to some new person the handing over would be a subject so sore she hardly dared to think of it. She had neither heard nor guessed anything of Guss's misfortune, but she was extremely surprised at Gladys so much as thinking of Seton when her Guss was there. Seton was a pleasant lad and a great favourite of hers, but compared to Guss!—"Well girls were faddy creatures."

Knowing nothing of her boy's disappointment, only thinking that if it had not been for Seton things would most likely have been otherwise, Mrs. Tarleton had given her consent to the match; and she looked forward dismally to the time when she would lose Gladys, and probably find some stranger interloping and wresting from her store, closets, keys, and linen press. Her one consolation was that time might do something

for her—she would make the marriage day a very distant one, and something might turn up.

There was for the present, at least, very little chance of any interloper being taken to by Guss—he was hard hit. Formerly he had found a love in every port, and then with merry heart sailed away over the green seas into blue water once more. Now, his brother officers could not induce him to join in any shore frolics that would mix him up with the fair sex. "No," he said to himself, "if I can't have Gladys I will not dangle about with other girls, I am too unhappy to flirt." And the feeling that he was unhappy, and had a right to be so, was almost a satisfaction. Byron was still read in those days, and a good gloomy view of affairs was manly and poetic; so he encouraged himself in thinking it heroic to deny himself pleasures he felt unfit for.

* * * * * * * *

Seton had taken his uncle's hint as to going to Creamington and bucketing Waterloo. His visits at Wellingtonia Lodge were now pleasanter than they used to be, as his uncle was a good

deal confined to the house, consequently he was not bored by being taken to the club, but had his afternoons at his own disposal; the country round is very beautiful, so he enjoyed the bucketing of Waterloo; many residents also were civil to Colonel Warrington's nephew and presumed heir.

All at the Lodge was much the same as when he first went there. Eliza ruled even more decidedly than then; now she was even entrusted with the key of the cellar as the colonel was unable to descend the steps without much difficulty. The boy was gone, but he had been replaced by another quite as stupid; Esther was still there; so the same sort of scolding went on, though undoubtedly it was of a weaker description. Even at his club the colonel was meeker; when one day some of his cronies, chaffing him about the numerous pictures that obscured his walls, and one said—

"You had better go to the sale to-morrow and secure some of the old masters there, you could make room for one or two on your walls, perhaps, if not you could hang them on the ceiling;"

He only replied—

"You are doosed clever."

The retort answered the purpose of shutting up the joker, as it did not leave much opening for further criticism of his state of over picturedness; but it was very weak to what his answer would have been a few months back.

Although he did not buy fresh pictures, unfortunately for Seton he took it into his head to alter and improve some of those he already possessed.

Now Seton had learnt drawing as boys do learn it, and he had even taken a good many lessons in oil painting, but without much effect as regards the painting of pictures, his abilities did not really lie in that direction. Still he had produced some things on canvas that passed for pictures, and his uncle was very proud of his genius as exhibited on the walls of the dining room at Wellingtonia Lodge in the shape of a lanky female figure sprawling on the ground. It was a copy from the celebrated picture by O.P.Q. Appleson and possessed every fault of that painter in perfection, unredeemed by his genius; it was a laboured copy of a too sketchy picture.

It is pleasant enough to have a reputation for

talent even with your own family, a distinction by the way very difficult to achieve; even in Seton's case the term family is incorrect, as his sisters did not believe that their brother had any talent at all; so the word family must be amended, and relations substituted. As a rule, the more distant the relationship the better are the talents visible; cousins, uncles, and aunts have better vision for these than brothers and sisters.

That an uncle may have favourable views of a nephew's talent, Colonel Warrington was an instance, for he had a great admiration of Seton's Venus sprawliosa, and now that he had taken it into his head that some of his other gems were improvable, he appointed our hero patcher in ordinary to himself and these gems.

As he would by no means permit the pictures to be disturbed by unhanging them, Seton, to his extreme discomfort, found that he was expected to stand on a step ladder and touch up such of these pictures as his uncle judged required his master hand.

A whole assortment of colours had been procured as well as palette and brushes. For a day

or two our hero fought off the alterations by demanding such things as megilp, hog tools, palette knife, mahl stick, and so on; necessaries that had been omitted by his less experienced uncle.

At last all was ready, he could shirk no longer, and morning after morning found him stuck on the steps dabbing away at trunks of trees, legs of soldiers, waves of the sea, sunsets, and such other things as his uncle desired.

By dint of doing very little and wiping out a great deal, he managed to give satisfaction, and the colonel was quite persuaded that great improvements had been effected, and that Seton's talents as an artist were considerable. So much so, that just before Seton left, on coming down one morning he found a sort of platform erected over the fireplace in the dining room, above which hung a warrior in half armour.

This was a portrait of the original Warrington, a person mentioned in history as having saved the life of Richard the Third at the battle of Bosworth. History has informed us that he saved this amiable sovereign's life twice at that battle, but he could not go on saving him for ever—he might have done so much longer, only unfortu-

nately he got killed himself; perhaps owing to this mischance the whole current of history has been turned.

Now to be stuck on a rickety platform to touch up such a family portrait as this was something too fearful. The colonel sat calmly munching away at his accustomed cold fruit tart; poor Seton, with his appetite quite taken from him, between mouthfuls of ham and eggs gazed at the stern warrior whose nose the colonel wished him to alter. This nose had for centuries been looked up to with respect, reverence, and awe; the truthful limner had depicted this nose with a wart on one side of it; wart and all it had been a subject almost of adoration to the generations of the house of Warrington. Now the sacrilegious colonel coolly requested Seton to remove the wart!

It was almost sufficient to have a man sent to a lunatic asylum for. Why, what would not nine-tenths of the upper ten thousand give to have such a wart in the family; half of them, if they possessed such a picture and called it a portrait of an ancestor, would have encouraged warts on themselves and their offspring, got receipts for

warts, or put on sham warts. Good gracious paint out the wart of the man who had twice saved the life of Richard the Third at Bosworth; think of Seton's feelings, his uncle eating cold fruit tart, and desiring him to paint out this warrior's wart!

In vain he urged his own incompetency; portrait painting, he said, was not his forte.

His uncle replied—

"I don't want you to paint a portrait, only to paint out that abominable excrescence. I don't want you to paint so much as a nose, only to paint out a wart. A fellow who can paint a picture like that," here he pointed to the Venus sprawliosa, "can surely remove a disfigurement from an ancestor. Why the doose should he have a wart?"

Seton, unable to adduce any reason why the original Warrington should have a wart, and flattered by the allusion to his Venus, yet determined that nothing should induce him to efface the family wart.

So, after breakfast had been cleared away, and when with the assistance of his uncle he had climbed up to the rickety platform, he com-

menced cleaning the face of his ancestor with soap and water, a preparatory step he assured his uncle to be necessary. Now he knew his uncle had the deepest horror of anything being spilt on chairs or carpet, therefore he dexterously managed so to upset the whole basin of soapy water, that part of its contents fell on the rug and carpet, part on the chair, and a small portion on the colonel himself, who had turned his back for a moment. During the confusion caused by this incident, and while his uncle was ringing the bell violently for cloths to wipe up the water, Seton tipped over the whole platform, thereby sending the contents of a jar of turpentine right across the room, and the palette charged with paint on to the carpet, while he himself rolled over and upset a chair or two.

Perfectly bewildered by these catastrophes, the colonel instinctively went on ringing the bell, till Eliza, Esther, and the new boy were all assembled.

This tableau was the final scene of the painting alterations comedy; the colonel had had enough of paints and their concomitants; Seton's

heroic stratagem had been successful—the family wart was saved.

Before Seton left Creamington he told his uncle of his engagement to Gladys. The colonel received the announcement with composure, merely remarking that as Seton was hardly out of his egg-shell, he trusted it would be a long engagement, at the same time he said he should like to see Gladys.

"Do you mean you would like Gladys to come here?"

"Yes, if her aunt would allow her to come to see an old man; I would invite one of your sisters to meet her, and you could escort her here."

So it came to be arranged that Gladys was to go to Wellingtonia Lodge on a three days' visit, and Mrs. Hodges was to leave her babes for the same period; there was no difficulty in inducing her to make this sacrifice, as Dora had a distinct eye to such main chance as was in the power of her uncle—she saw no reason why Seton should inherit all his property—she and Thomas wanted money as much as Seton did or more, he had no babes—she had always done her duty by the

colonel, as indeed her sisters had—they had all worked at slippers for him, at table covers—had knitted, netted and knotted all sorts of things for the adornment of their uncle's sofas and easy chairs; they had all performed such like proper duties, but hitherto none of them had been invited to enter the sacred precincts of Wellingtonia Lodge. Consequently there was not only no difficulty made, but the invitation was jumped at, and the fact of its being sent produced great elation in the breasts of the residents at Slumpton-in-Squash.

Why Dora was the sister selected for this honour, was only known to the colonel; she was not a special favourite of his, and when she arrived he was not overpoweringly courteous to her. But we must not anticipate. If the uncle wished simply to annoy his other nieces, he succeeded, for Mrs. Wren and Mrs. Sarncombe were extremely jealous of Dora's being selected to meet Gladys.

It is not a long journey from Chippington to Creamington—indeed Gladys and Seton thought the distance too short; it was so pleasant travelling together. Seton was delighted at the

admiration the fair face of Gladys evidently excited; for the first time he felt as if he possessed her; for the first time he realized that she was all his own; at the "Quarries" or at Westerham it had seemed only just a matter of course that they should love one another—out here in the world he recognized that he had won a peerless prize. When he was at Pau, mixing with, and occasionally flirting with the beauties there collected, he had known that Gladys was far nicer than any of them, but he had thought that they too were nice; now he felt that she was immeasurably superior to any of them, and their charms he hardly admitted at all; it was, in racing parlance, Gladys first, the rest nowhere. He was very proud of the admiration his betrothed excited. Her feelings had been, and were quite different—she never compared him with others—he was to her a thing apart. On this journey she did not take pleasure in having a conquered knight as her escort, but she was gay and joyful, because she was with her heart's treasure. She had seen nothing of society, still she had known Guss, who was a very fair specimen of a young man—she had seen him and loved

him after a fashion, but she never thought for an instant of comparing him with Seton, who was her very heart's core; she never even commenced thinking how things would have to be had he no existence—she could not conceive of such a state of things; all through her girlhood she had remembered him, had revelled in the thoughts of those early days when he and she wandered hand in hand among the flowers and through the groves of Westerham. She had never forgotten the delightful excursions, the strange tales he had told her, the lovely houses he had made. Seton loved as men do, Gladys as women can.

Arrived at Creamington, Gladys, her maid, and her baggage were put into a fly, Seton mounted the box, and they drove off to Wellingtonia Lodge.

The introduction passed off easily enough; Gladys was not in the least afraid of the colonel, and she soon made herself quite at home, took much interest in the pictures and other decorations of the dining room, criticized and praised with the same freedom with which she was accustomed to comment on her aunt's curiosities.

The colonel sat in his great chair looking at

her from under his eyelids, but apparently absorbed in the newspaper. It was quite a new sensation to him to have a fairy flitting about among the heavy furniture and formal arrangements of his dining room. He was surprised into a broad smile, when she took him to task for having his canary covered over.

"The poor dear doesn't like it, he won't sing if you keep him like that; you ought not to do it till his proper time for going to bed."

The colonel condescended to explain that he had done it purposely to prevent the bird singing, as he wished to be able to hear his guest's voice.

"Dick chatters so it would be impossible to hear any other chatterbox if he once began."

"Oh, Colonel Warrington, do you mean that I am a chatterbox; Seton, please tell him that I am generally as quiet as a mouse; but I could not help admiring his things."

Seton thereupon explained that she was indeed very quiet when at home, quite, as she said mouselike—when she was reading or asleep.

"Now Colonel Warrington, Seton is worse than you are, and he ought not to be; there is excuse for you, as you don't know me; but for him to say such a thing!"

"I shall hope to know you better soon, my dear."

"Yes, and then you are sure to take my part, ain't you? Seton is so hard on me."

"Then we will pack him off to his hotel for a punishment; remember we dine as usual at half-past five, Seton."

"Well, uncle, I leave her in your charge, and I hope she will behave properly during my long absence."

When Seton was gone, the colonel suggested that Gladys might like to go upstairs and unpack. She thought perhaps it would be as well.

"But before I go," she said, "I want to ask you something."

"Anything you ask, my dear, shall be done if possible."

"What I want to ask is if I might call you uncle, like Seton does—to say Colonel Warrington sounds so formidable?"

"I think it would be convenient, my dear; now run off, and get out your best cap."

Gladys looked at him to see if he really thought she wore caps, having no idea what Creamington fashions might be. The colonel who had only

used the term generically for evening attire, rang the bell for Eliza to show Gladys to her room.

Determined to elucidate the point as to caps, Gladys said—

"I have no caps. Aunt Mary wears caps, not young ladies like me."

The idea of those shining waves of soft rich hair being covered by a cap tickled the colonel immensely—his notion of a cap was something between a nightcap and a turban such as was then worn.

Gladys, detecting the smile, laughed out and said—

"I see, you are full of fun."

At this moment Eliza entered, and looked enquiringly from one to the other, till her master rather ashamed at being caught smiling, retired into his usual sour expression, and directed her to show Miss Clifford to her room.

The dinner went off pleasantly enough, most of the conversation being carried on by Seton and Gladys. The colonel listened, and his eyes twinkled with inward amusement, but he restrained his lips. While Eliza was present he seemed to feel that his dignity must be kept up.

After dinner the drawingroom door was opened, and Gladys was solemnly inducted into that apartment, while the gentlemen remained behind to drink their wine. At first she was timid, left all to herself amid the splendours of the drawing room, but soon she began examining everything. There were marbles, bronzes, buhl cabinets, bric-à-brac, and pictures, all to be investigated; the room was covered with a carpet so soft that her feet sank in it, and seemed lost in a maze of gorgeous flowers; the curtains were splendid; there were many huge candles of different colours held in the hands of statuettes or set in candelabra, and there was a heavy fragrance of incense in the air. She revelled in all these novelties; and when, as she was looking at a picture in which two churches were represented, each with a clock in its tower, the near one played a tune and struck the hour, followed by the distant one repeating the chime with a far away sound, she could scarcely restrain herself from opening the folding doors to express her pleasure, and invite the wine drinkers to take part in it. But she recollected that it was not new to them, and just then the front door bell rang; the ring was followed by a

sound of voices, and a bumping down of baggage. It was the arrival of Mrs. Hodges.

Seton went out to meet his sister, but the colonel remained in his great chair, and when Dora entered to greet him he merely gave her two fingers in his usual frigid manner.

It had been known that Dora could not arrive in time for dinner; now she said she had dined at the junction, and could quite well wait till tea time for more food, so she was shown upstairs.

Gladys sat in the drawing room listening to the sounds and waiting, but every one seemed to have forgotten her existence. Feeling tired, and having exhausted her curiosity, she tucked herself up on the sofa and fell fast asleep. Thus Dora found her when she came down freed from dust, but very hungry; for in truth, although she had eaten something at the junction, it had by no means been what she would ordinarily have called a dinner, as the things eaten had been some of the sandwiches for which that junction had so extensive a reputation, and as dessert she had taken one or two Banbury cakes. These cakes, indigestible as they were, had been assimilated long ago, and Dora was in that uncomfort-

able state of emptiness which conduces to the reverse of sweetness of temper.

She had declared to her uncle that she was not hungry, but in truth such statement was a fib, enunciated for the purpose of preventing his being put out by her inconvenient hour of arrival; she was mortally afraid of offending him. She also presumed that there would be something good for tea in honour of her advent.

For about half an hour she and Gladys were alone, during which time, being cross and hungry, she did not make things pleasant for her companion; she was also put out by finding Seton's intended apparently so much at home. Of course she kissed Gladys, but the kiss was chilly, and the conversation between them languished in spite of all Gladys' efforts to be agreeable.

It was an immense relief to both when tea was brought in, and the colonel and Seton joined them.

Eliza had placed the urn upon the table, and Dora had at once assumed the office of tea maker, so when the colonel entered he saw his real niece presiding at his tea table, and his niece by treaty thrown into the background; he made no remark, and received his tea at Dora's hands.

Seton talked, and Gladys, cheering up, joined in. Dora, finding nothing but a ginger cake and thin bread and butter were provided, pretty nearly cleared off those comestibles to the infinite disgust of her uncle, who having dined well himself, thought it unladylike for her to thus fill her stomach at tea; he was not hungry, why the doose should she be, was his line of thought.

In a tone meant to be sarcastic, he said—

"Had not you better have some mutton chops?"

Dora, not being intimate with the inflections of his voice, and perhaps rendered obtuse by hunger, took this offer in earnest, jumped at the idea, and replied—

"I should like a chop, for I dined so very early; if it is not too much trouble."

The colonel solemnly rang the bell, and on Eliza's appearing, said—

"Mrs. Hodges will take some chops; you had better lay the table in the dining room again."

"Oh no, please don't," put in Dora, "just a chop on a plate in here, please; don't let me make so much trouble."

But the colonel was determined not to have

chops brought into the drawing room; she had said chop and chops she should have, but not there; so the order was calmly repeated—

"Mrs. Hodges will take chops in the dining room."

Unfortunate Dora felt she had put her foot in it; there was a long interval; then the folding door was opened, and she had to go into the dining room by herself, and eat chops which, in spite of her hunger, seemed to stick in her throat.

Eliza was civil, and produced wine, so she ceased to feel that sinking for want of nourishment which she had been contending with, but she acutely felt that she might be selling the prospects of those her husband defined as her babes for mutton chops.

Seton had wished to keep his sister company over her repast, but his uncle had sternly forbidden him to leave the drawing room.

On the whole the evening was the reverse of a pleasant one, except to the colonel, who felt that he had done his duty to himself, and shown much determination.

The three days for which he had invited Gladys and Dora passed rather slowly. Dora was

sweet enough when the gentlemen were present, but she was very cross and snappish to Gladys, who consequently ceased to enjoy her visit, drew in and stood on her dignity. The doing of this was very pretty to see; Seton did not understand the change in her, and she offered no explanation; but the colonel quite comprehended how matters were, and his eyes twinkled as he noticed the manner of Gladys' haughtiness. He thoroughly enjoyed the antagonism between her and Dora, and did all he could to heighten it by openly showing his preference for his new niece.

At parting, however, he made them both presents of like value; the only difference was, Dora received two fingers and Gladys three. But to Seton his uncle said, "She will make a good mistress for Westerham." Therefore our hero and heroine journeyed back very joyfully to Chippington, feeling the whole affair, though tedious, had been a great success.

Dora, ignorant of the speech to Seton, and unaware of the three fingers, rejoiced exceedingly in the equal gift; she once more partook of junction sandwiches and Banbury cakes, but as she munched them they brought little joy, for

they reminded her of the chop episode, and she feared her visit had not on the whole been beneficial to the interests of the babes she had left behind at Slumpton.

CHAPTER III.

CONSPIRACIES ARE HATCHED.

THE time was now arrived when that portion of the Holborn Estates on which the late Mrs. Herold's trustees held a first mortgage, had been put up to auction. The result was made known to Seton. To his horror and dismay only seventeen thousand out of the thirty-one thousand pounds due was realized.

It appeared that there had been things and people necessary to be paid off before the sale could take place, or in connection with that transaction; so, although the property had fetched nearly enough to cover the sum due, yet the amount actually available was only this seventeen thousand pounds.

The explanation Mr. Fermor gave of the matter was, that formerly this portion of the Holborn Estates had been much more valuable than it now was, and would have been sufficient to clear everything; if Seton had but waited

there was every reason to believe the value would again have risen; but he had been importunate, and insisted on the sale contrary to the opinion of older and wiser heads—by this Mr. Fermor meant his own.

"It was very unfortunate. Seton had no one but himself to blame; he had forced on the sale, and here was the result; perhaps he had listened to bad advice. In any case the thing was done. Fortunately the balance was not lost, as there was a further security arranged expressly to guard against any untoward contingency of this description; it consisted in an overriding claim on another portion of the estate; but for the present nothing could be done to realize that, as this overriding claim was of the nature of a second mortgage."

Infinitely disgusted at this result, Seton took much counsel with Garston, and that gentleman strongly advised him to have it out with Fermor. If the thirty-one thousand had been properly secured, why it would have been forthcoming; if not properly secured, the solicitor was answerable; and how could it be that other things had to be paid, if this was a first mortgage?

"Make him explain that," said Garston, "make him explain why so much was mopped up before you could receive the balance."

Seton wrote again and again, but Mr. Fermor's lucid statements were wholly incomprehensible.

There was something about judgment debts which it had been necessary to buy up to protect the mortgage, a good deal about a certain annuity that had been purchased and might some day become valuable; also Mr. Fermor, who by this time was aware that Seton had some adviser conversant with legal matters, constantly averred that he was weary of the whole affair and would willingly see Seton in the hands of some other adviser. He still stuck to it that the money was quite secure.

Our hero also wrote to Colonel Warrington, but that old soldier declared he never had known anything about the money; true he had been a trustee, but it had been the merest formality. Mr. Herold had done all the business part, he had confided in his brother-in-law and Mr. Fermor. Seton must look to that gentleman; if he was in a scrape he would be sure to extricate him; pro-

bably it might take time, but where was the good of being in a hurry?

Seton was so very sick of the eternal "take time," and "don't be in a hurry." His situation was, he had to pay thirty-two thousand with seventeen, and yet he was urged not to be in a hurry, to take time. All he could now do was to pass on the words to Wren and Sarncombe, Hodges and Garston. The two former were quite willing to give this time, so the seventeen thousand was expended in paying the latter each their eight thousand, and the remaining one thousand was given to the bankers on account of the bank debt, which was about four thousand pounds.

Westerham was now saddled with the mortgage of thirty thousand, and the sixteen thousand owing to Wren and Sarncombe. The receipts from the property were about fifteen hundred a year, and the Holborn Estates paid five per cent. interest on the fourteen thousand still due from them.

Thus our hero had about two thousand and sixty pounds a year, out of which he had to pay eighteen hundred and forty; therefore his

personal income would now be only two hundred and twenty pounds, a very narrow sum indeed.

Garston was very pleased at receiving his eight thousand pounds—he had hardly expected to get it so soon—and he now ceased to trouble himself about Seton's affairs; at bottom he hated him, he knew how Seton had despised him and objected to his marriage with Jane. Our hero, unconsciously to himself, constantly reminded him of his former contempt of him; indeed, without in the least intending it, he frequently showed him that he did not regard him as an equal—the fact was that he did not so regard him, and, without at all wishing it to be apparent, yet such feeling would show itself. Had not Garston been very sensitive on this point he might never have noticed Seton's belief in his inferiority; as it was, he often imagined a slight where none was intended; having a sovereign contempt for all lower than himself in the social scale, he imagined those above him might equally look down on him. Seton had got over his first dislike of Garston, which had been simply a matter of pride; what he now felt was that this man was not a gentleman in thought any more than he was by birth.

He wished to make up for his former boyish ebullition and accept Garston as a connection, but the more he saw of him the more he felt a sort of repugnance to his vulgarity.

Garston no longer cared about Seton's affairs, except that he thought he saw his way to making something out of them and at the same time paying him off for his cursed pride, as he called it. Certain things had recently come to his knowledge about the firm of Wreckford, Fermor and Blyte; this knowledge he intended to work so as to injure Seton and benefit himself.

As far as outside show went, Garston intended to be on excellent terms with his brother-in-law; indeed this was for the present a necessary part of his scheme. Another thing he wished to accomplish was to get Seton up to London. He had made up his mind that he would give up his country practice and once more seek the wider field of London. As a married man, with a Miss Herold to wife, he had looked forward to becoming a leading county solicitor, he had meant to lay hold of all opportunities of enriching himself, but at the same time to be eminently respectable. He had sown his wild oats, and no one in or about

Chippington knew anything of these. His aim had been to get into society, profit by it, and keep in it; perhaps he might some day aspire to be member for Chippington—in a neighbouring borough the thing had been accomplished by a man not half so sharp as he was. The death of Jane had altered his views. He now had money, and after all it was slow work climbing as he had proposed; he knew of shorter ways of rising; above all, in London, he need not be so disgustingly respectable. He ran up to town; renewed his visits at old haunts, found them very pleasant; got scent of schemes full of fortunes; finally he determined to chuck up Chippington and resume the only life worth leading, as it appeared to him. In addition to Jane's eight thousand, what with the sale of his business, and one thing or another, he could more than round off the ten thousand—quite enough for a very handsome nést egg.

He was not a clever man, only something of a sharp one, and one of his plans to injure Seton was of a very lame description. He thought to get him to go up to town and join him in keeping a bachelor's crib, lead him into extravagance,

get him involved in play, or some of the other things that ruin so many young men, and thus destroy, not only the little fortune still left him but also his prospects with his uncle.

In furtherance of this notable scheme he advised Seton to give up living at Westerham. It was, he told him, evident that the house would not let furnished; "Sell the furniture, and let the place on lease; seven years won't hurt you—but if you think that too long, I daresay it can be managed for three. In any case you will have to refurnish, for the things won't suit you when you marry and settle down, they are much too old fashioned for a certain young lady."

"Never mind about her," said Seton, "and I don't like selling the old things, although, doubtless, they are shabby."

"Well, you know best, but I wouldn't think of bringing a girl like that into such a rookery as Westerham is now; it can't have been done up for half a century."

This was true or nearly so; but Seton resented the coarse terms in which Garston had spoken of his home, and with an astonished stare he answered—"When I want to consult you on what

is fit for Westerham or—well, its inhabitants—I will do so—just now we will drop the subject, if you please."

"Dear me! no offence, I hope?"

"Oh no, no offence; only let us change the subject."

Nevertheless, when soon after Seton received from the bank a statement of account, and a polite request that he would diminish his debt at his earliest convenience—at the same time they thanked him for the thousand pounds recently paid, but intimated that they had hoped to receive the whole balance when the mortgage was foreclosed—he seriously thought he had better sell off the old furniture, and so obtain funds to settle the bank debt if possible.

After a struggle with his pride and his feelings, he made up his mind to have an auction at Westerham, and sought out Garston as one able to advise as to an auctioneer.

Garston, thinking his plan was beginning to work, supplied him with an auctioneer and sound advice as to the conduct of the sale, which accordingly took place and twelve hundred pounds were handed to the bank in further reduction of the debt.

Thus Westerham was cleared of all its furniture except a few relics; Seton was disappointed in the amount realised, but he presumed the bank would be satisfied for the present.

Now that Westerham had ceased to be habitable, he took another step in the path in which Garston wished him to walk—he went to London. At this point, however, he diverged; take rooms with Garston he would not; it might be cheaper, and it might be more jolly, as Garston urged, but although he certainly wished to be economical he did not quite believe in the cheapness: he was not going to town for amusement, and he had no notion of chumming with Garston.

Garston was quite mistaken in thinking Seton a likely man to be led into dissipation or bad company. He had no vicious propensities; he had played and lost a little money at Pau, and he had also suffered there from too much champagne; his eyes had felt like mere pin points, and his head had ached intolerably—he had quite made up his mind not to play any more, and not to drink more than was good for him. In Gladys he had a shield from all other temptations.

He was glad to go to London to be nearer to Mr. Fermor, as he intended to stick to him as tightly as he could till he received the fourteen thousand still due from the Holborn Estates.

Arrived in Town, his first business was to find a suitable lodging; he had no idea that this would be at all difficult—there were endless houses, and doubtless plenty of apartments to be had.

First he thought of taking unfurnished rooms, and he exhausted himself in searching for these; but there was always a difficulty about attendance, cooking, and so forth; he also ascertained that the cost of furnishing, even in the simplest manner, would make away with too much money—he had but two hundred and twenty pounds a year at the outside, and no reserve sum available.

Finally he determined to take furnished lodgings, then if he did not like them he could change, and he would have no bother about servants.

Furnished lodgings were plentiful enough, but gauged by his present resources they were dear; certainly there were cheap ones, but they were very nasty, they all seemed to have the

same flavour of fluff and fustiness. In such situations as he desired the amount demanded was far too great; even in places not very desirable, the usual answer to his question of, "How much would these be a week?" was, "two pounds the lodgings, 'alf-a-crown kitching fire, a shillin' for boot cleaning, and gas is a hextra." He felt it a great come down in life to have to consider gas and boot cleaning, but the total sum of these items would run away with about half his income, so he judged even these apartments too dear.

He tried advertising. Now he had indeed turned on the deluge; from all quarters of the town came answers; very avalanches of letters of all sorts and sizes were piled on his table at breakfast time, brought up to him in his room at odd hours, stuck into the rack in the bar, or put on the chimney piece of the coffee room at the Piccadilly, where of course he was staying. John solemnly presented to him such of these rag-tag letters as came about dinner time, and one day volunteered the remark, "that Mr. 'Erold must be nearly tired of so much correspondence."

Seton, glad to disburthen his mind, told John what all the letters were about.

John affected deep surprise—affected because he had acquainted himself with Seton's secret by examining the advertisement sheet of the "Times" and there found, "That a gentleman of quiet habits wished for an airy bedroom and sitting room, in a quiet situation. Rent must be very moderate. Apply S. Herold, Esq., Piccadilly Hotel."

"Dear me, said John, why, Mr. 'Erold, if I 'ad only known it before, sir—why, I believe I can put you in the way of what you want."

"I wish to goodness I had asked you, then, for I am sick of going about; confound them, the airy and spacious apartments are always poky unsavoury holes, even then they turn up their noses at me when I explain that I expect one pound a week to cover everything except sitting room fire."

"Well, the figure is rather low, Mr. 'Erold; I don't ask questions, but a gentleman like you sir, and your father and grandfather before you, would be hard to please at a pound a week."

"It is all I can afford at present, John."

"If you will give me till to-morrow, I will try what I can do, sir; I have a notion in my 'ead that may suit."

"Certainly, and if you can find me what I want, I am sure I shall be very much obliged, and of course only too glad to give you something for your trouble."

"Don't mention it, Mr. 'Erold, it will be quite a pleasure to do anything for one of your family, sir," and for the moment John quite felt as if he had known the grandfather.

Next day, John informed Seton that he had found what he felt sure would suit him. "Until I 'ad arsked her, I couldn't say for certain. The lady 'asnt been in the 'abit of letting lodgings, but I thought as she 'ad a larger 'ouse than she requires, she might be induced to accommodate you, sir."

"The lady is a sort of cousing of mine, and very well to do, 'aving lost her 'usband recently. She 'as took a 'ouse in Remington Place, a very genteel locality, Mr. 'Erold. I told her you was a very quiet gent, and not up to larks, and she said she would be 'appy to accommodate you, finding it to seem lonely without a man in the

house, sir. Will you please to go and see if you like the situation, if so, you can 'ave the apartments on your own terms."

Seton delighted at finding something likely to suit at last, warmly thanked John, and went off to Remington Place. There he found all things as had been described. Remington Place was a row of good houses, airily situated not far from Primrose hill. The lady the house belonged to, Mrs. Filters, was a handsome middle aged woman, clad in a rich black silk, and with a heavy gold chain round her neck.

Seton had been shewn into the parlour, and Mrs. Filters received him very graciously; a very few words and a very short inspection of the rooms offered for his acceptance sufficed to show Seton that he had fallen on his legs, that No. 8, Remington Place was a most cheerful abode, and that the price accepted was very small for the comforts he would secure. The bargain was completed at once.

Mrs. Filters, as John had said, was a widow; her late husband, of whom a very striking portrait hung in the parlour above-mentioned, had been in the stone and marble line in quite a large way.

Before he himself was placed beneath one of his own slabs, he managed to accumulate a fortune for his widow, who was left with an only daughter to mourn his loss. Mrs. Filters was truly sorry for her Nehemiah's decease; she mourned for him, and she covered him with the handsomest marble slab in stock; she also selected one of their most simple and appropriate inscriptions, which ran thus—

"This modest stone, which few vain marbles can,
Plainly denotes here lies an honest man,
He lived discreetly, honest, true and just,
His soul's aloft, his body here is dust."

It was not absolutely suitable to the slab, but Grief has never yet been represented as very quick of sight or understanding; Love is always blind, and every one said "Mrs. F. 'ad done the thing 'andsome."

It had been easy enough to find a purchaser of the business, so, it came about that when Mrs. Filters retired from the precincts of the marble yard to the refinements of Remington Place, she was more than comfortably off. Consequently she furnished her new house with much comfort, even with splendour; indeed, she spent more on

this garnishing than she had intended, for she was a prudent woman.

The bedrooms, parlour, back parlour and offices had been suitably and substantially furnished, but when commencing the adornment of the drawing room, Mrs. Filters had been led away by what a friendly upholsterer called a magnificent "sweet" of very elaborate and beautifully carved furniture, comprising twelve chairs, two arms, a lounge, a lady's easy, and a superb couch, all covered in yellow satin.

All these were then lying at this friendly upholsterer's shop and were to be sold a bargain; the things, he said, were as good as new, very fashionable, and just suited to a lady like her who could afford a few odd pounds to have as "'andsome a drawing room as any in London," they would be a credit to her, tasty and fashionable.

Mrs. Filters took his advice and purchased the "sweet;" she knew he was a decent man, indeed he had been a friend of her Nehemiah's, and if things had chanced otherwise and the upholsterer had gone first, she felt sure Nehemiah would have done his best for him in his line of business, so she did not doubt the honesty of his advice.

As a fact the things were very good, the friendly upholsterer of course got his little profit on selling them, but that did not alter their intrinsic value. The worst of it was, Mrs. Filters felt constrained to furnish up to these splendid articles; so a lovely green carpet of a make called velvet pile, and of a fern pattern, was laid down, to this was added a rug on which was depicted a recumbent stag, curtains with a rich red satin stripe down them, gilt cornices, inlaid chiffonier, rosewood centre and occasional tables. When these articles had been arranged in the apartment, and to them were added some other bargains in the shape of mirrors, a cabinet, pictures, glass chandelier, and china ornaments, the room was "fit for a queen;" so said the friendly auctioneer, and Mrs. Filters was much delighted with her splendour.

There was much happiness in having the most magnificent drawing room in Remington Place, but it had cost a pretty penny, and what should she do with it now she had got it? There was but Emma and herself, and the two parlours were all they could use.

The first thing that she did with it was to cover the carpet with what is termed a crumb

cloth, case the chairs and sofa in holland covers, put yellow gauze over the gilt frames and cornices, tie up the curtains in bags, and put plain covers on the tables. As an afterthought Mrs. Filters took it into her head that it might be a wise thing to let lodgings; she had expended much more than she had intended to do in furnishing; the rent a lodger would pay would go some way in redeeming this extravagance; she had two maids and she liked cooking herself, so there were plenty of servants to do for a lodger as well as for her and Emma.

Moreover, it was comfortable to have a man in the house, she always had had a man in the house, and there was a lonely feeling without one; thinking of her dear Nehemiah, she wiped her eyes. Yes, even to hear a man's step in the passage would be pleasant, and his hat in the hall would be a protection. Then she thought of other accustomed tokens of Nehemiah's presence, and, as she remembered his sweet snore, she fairly wept.

Her idea had been to let the drawing room and the bedroom on the same floor to some elderly man of quiet habits, but John's communication

respecting Seton had put a fresh current of thought into her head. John, although a waiter, was looked on with much respect by all his connections; he was an authority on so many subjects, and he had put by a good sum of money, so his recommendation of Seton was quite enough; the figure, as John put it, was low, but Mrs. Filters did not care so much for the amount as to have a quiet, genteel lodger; in Seton's case, too, Mrs. Filters, in her capacity of mother, had conceived a project in the interests of her daughter.

It was quite a change of plan to be effected so suddenly; instead of an old city gentleman, to have a young gentleman inducted into her apartments was indeed an alteration. But John's high testimony in favour of Seton quite settled the affair. "The quietest young gent I ever set eyes on, and I have known the family for three generations," said John. "He is a bit down in the world just now, but he is sure to be all right again soon. Why, there's his uncle, the colonel, rolling in money, and no one but him to leave it to."

Seton was only too glad to get such rooms at one pound a week; the sitting room we have

already described, and the bedroom was most comfortable, and the greatest possible contrast to those he had been shown in the dozens of houses he had visited in search of accommodation. John was not above receiving a sovereign for his trouble, our hero's luggage was moved in, and all was settled.

So much was plain and above-board; and Seton little suspected that the handsome, elderly lady with the gold chain, who spoke so pleasantly, and wiped her eyes so naturally when she spoke of her deceased Nehemiah, had laid a deep plot to obtain him for a son-in-law. He was now the victim of two separate plots, one conceived by Garston from hatred, the other by Mrs. Filters which was intended to eventuate in a very different feeling.

Seton, ignorant of both intrigues, thought he was now very pleasantly located; and, settled in Remington Place, he began to enjoy himself after such simple fashion as pleased him most. He was determined to be very frugal and saving.

Of course Gladys was kept informed of all his doings, and he much harried Mr. Fermor with

letters pressing for a settlement with the Holborn Estates. That lawyer wished Seton had either remained far away in the country, or gone even further to a place too hot to mention.

Our hero had now entered on an entirely new phase of life. He had a vague hope of finding something to do in London, his great wish was to pass his time usefully; his great regret was that he had not been brought up to any profession. Now that his dream of living as his fathers had done at Westerham had faded for a while, he wished he had taken Mr. Fermor's advice as to going to the bar. He envied the artizans who he encountered with their baskets of tools and their business like air. He longed for work.

CHAPTER IV.

PLOTS PREVAIL.

THE plot against Seton, of which Garston was the originator, was directed against his purse. The plot conceived by Mrs. Filters was against his person; before she had met Nehemiah Filters, when yet an unmarried Caroline, she had been a very sentimental young lady; her father had been a soapboiler, and soap boiling is a very respectable business, indeed, almost on a par with wholesale, so Caroline had been sent to a regular boarding school; there she had found many sympathetic souls, and imbibed further draughts of sentimentality. For some years she had dreamt of lovers of high degree; she called it "'igh," as even this boarding school could not make her always pronounce her haytches. No such lovers, however, came to the boiling yard or her father's respectable habitation, so she eventually took up with Nehemiah, who had very superior whiskers, and who could quote poetry, the know-

ledge of which was useful in his avocation; there was also something poetically ghastly in that avocation itself.

All gloominess had long since departed from Mrs. Filters' view of life, but a good dash of sentiment still remained to her. It had not been her lot to be wooed by a squire of high degree, but why should not Emma achieve that distinction?

Emma was a very handsome girl, and had received a good education; she could play on the piano tolerably, embroider very well, knew her geography and her history, as young ladies of Clapham schools do know these things—in short, her accomplishments were too numerous to mention. Her mother had gone to a boarding school of an inferior description, she had been to a seminary of a very superior type. Her mother took great pride in her daughter's beauty and accomplishments, and when John suggested Seton as a lodger, it seemed to her as if she saw an opening through which Emma could step into a society such as her beauty and her education fitted her for—she herself was perfectly con-

tent with the rank in life she occupied and filled so comfortably, but she was ambitious for her daughter; there was also, she thought, a sentiment about the aristocracy which could not be found among soap boilers or mural tablet makers, however respectable and prosperous members of those trades may be.

John had enlarged on the dignity of the Herolds as a county family with landed possessions, he had also dwelt on the historical glories of the house of Warrington, as well as the wealth of the colonel, for John was exceedingly well up in the histories of the frequenters of the Piccadilly Hotel; he devoted many hours that would have otherwise been dull to the study of the peerage, the landed gentry and county histories.

Here was a nice young gentleman, a little down for want of money just at present, of excellent family, quite one of the aristocracy, and who would be wealthy after a while—dropping as it were from the clouds into Remington Place came this hero. Certainly he should have the apartments, Mrs. Filters had thought; why, he was the very thing, the exact person who

ought to have such rooms; she would keep on the holland covers and the yellow gauze, and of course the crumb cloth, but the curtains should be shaken from their bags, and good table covers should take the place of the common cloths. Thus arranged, the sitting room would remind him of the glories of his own old ancestral home.

Mrs. Filters rather wondered whether at such a house as Westerham covers were ever put on sofas or chairs, but ended by concluding that of course they were—no one from the Queen downwards could wish to sit on yellow satin always. John had mentioned that crumb cloths were considered quite genteel.

What a heaven-sent chance for Emma, thought her mother! Now if young Herold will only wipe his feet on the mat when he comes in, how comfortable it will all be. Mrs. Filters determined not to let Emma suspect her match-making intentions, she would leave it all to her daughter's attractions, putting it thus to herself—"A young gentleman come up fresh to London, if he don't go racketing about, is sure to be dull of evenings after a bit, and glad to have a sociable cup of tea and hear the piano, it

sounds homelike; for the rest of it just leave it to nature say I—Emma's like is not to be met with every day—if there ain't two loving 'earts sitting on the yellow sofa before long I'm mistaken, that's all."

When Seton appeared, his intended mother-in-law liked his looks much. True he had not the whiskers of Nehemiah, indeed he had very little whisker at all, neither had he the stature of the deceased sculptor; but there was an air of breeding about him that Mrs. Filters readily perceived and approved, also she was charmed with his whiteness of skin, and gentleness of manner. Nehemiah had been swarthy, and although an excellent man and husband, yet delicacy of manner and gentility of appearance had not been his strong points. Mrs. Filters longed to take this clean looking young man to her maternal arms and bless him.

Everything was very nice indeed, the cooking quite excellent, as Mrs. Filters saw to it herself. Nehemiah had been fond of good living, and his wife had striven to please him in cooking as well as in all other respects; now she wished to please Seton, as she considered the heart was

often to be reached through the mouth. She would please his palate, and so lay a foundation for Emma to please his eyes.

For a considerable time our hero saw very little of Emma, occasionally he caught a glimpse of her flitting about the stairs; he was conscious of a sort of female atmosphere pervading the house, and he knew his landlady had a daughter named Emma; but he was not curious respecting her, and he made no effort to scrape acquaintance with either daughter or mother; he had other things to think of, and as yet had not got to that stage of dulness Mrs. Filters had looked forward to when tea would be as manna in the wilderness if taken in the company of Emma, and the sound of the piano as falling waters to a thirsty man, or be esteemed a home comfort.

On the contrary, he rather disliked the sound of the piano, which frequently floated upwards and penetrated into his sitting room, where he was turning over in his mind how best to get the fourteen thousand out of Fermor.

Mrs. Filters would have preferred Seton's breaking ground first; she had made sure that he

would attempt to get introduced to Emma—it was only natural that a young man circumstanced as he was would do so; but as her lodger made no sign, she determined to make some sort of overture. First, she hoped the piano did not annoy him; he was polite but untruthful enough to say, "Oh, no, thank you, not at all." Then she borrowed books from him, intimating that her daughter was wishing to read that very book. Following up this, she hoped Mr. Herold would not stand on ceremony, but borrow from their library—her poor dear husband had been quite a literary man, and had left quite a library. Seton had not much confidence in the late Nehemiah's selection of books, and he had a good many of his own, so he was not inveigled into the front parlour by this artifice, and he continued to take no sort of notice of Emma. His own thoughts were just now more interesting to him than any Emma, or even than his books which lay open before him of an evening, but were very little read. Emma herself was becoming rather piqued at this young fellow not noticing her; she was a tall, dark girl, with fine features, splendid hair, and beautiful eyes, a

girl of sweet disposition, good and amiable, but of course a little proud of her personal appearance, of her manners and education; none of her female friends could hold a candle to her, and all her male acquaintances openly adulated her. How, then, was it that this young man took no notice of her whatever? To say the least of it, the thing was trying.

Under these circumstances, when it fell out one evening that the parlour maid was absent, and Mrs. Filters looking up suddenly from her work, said—

"Lawk-a-day, Emma, if I haven't forgot to send up Mr. Herold's tea; do take it up to him, there's a dear!"

Emma was not reluctant to take a peep at the silent lodger; perhaps she also calculated that when taking him his tea he could also get a good peep at her, hitherto they had only met in the half lighted passages.

She took up the tray, entered his room, and set it down on the table. Besides saying come in, when she knocked, Seton took no notice of this proceeding, he never even looked up. She descended the stairs, feeling quite indignant—a

handsome girl likes to be looked at, and she had expected to be thanked for her civility in performing the maid's duty. Next she took up a very neat copper kettle with a glass handle that was devoted to boiling water for tea making, this she placed on the hob. Still Seton never raised his eyes or changed his attitude; it was about his usual tea time, and it never struck him that it was not Sarah bringing it.

It was not till Emma had left the room in high dudgeon, and with rather a determined closing of the door, which roused Seton, that looking at the tea tray, he perceived there was no milk, then he called out "hi, hi," and receiving no answer he went quickly to the door and opened it again, calling "hi, Sarah."

To his dismay he was confronted by a very handsome girl clad in silk and wearing gold ornaments.

After staring for a moment, he said—

"I beg your pardon . . . . . I thought, Sarah . . . . . "

Emma, who had heard the "hi, hi," and was returning, wondering what he meant by that exclamation, noticed his confusion, and said—

"Sarah was out, so my mother requested me to bring up your tea things; can I do anything else for you?"

"Oh, thank you, very much, I am sorry to be so troublesome, but there is no milk."

"How stupid of me, I will bring some directly; you see I am not used to . . . . . tea trays, there isn't anything else wrong, is there?"

Seton turned to look how this might be; he felt flustered at this sudden apparition, and he wished he had not spoken about the milk; fancy bothering such a girl as this about milk.

Emma waited in the doorway, and Seton, after looking at the tray, thanked her and said he thought there was nothing else. He thought also that she looked very handsome standing there, but his admiration was only expressed by his eyes; our hero was mortal, so could not help being struck with Emma's beauty, and she, perceiving his involuntary look of admiration, smiled, and went for the milk.

Returning with it, she placed the little jug on the table, and said—

"I am afraid our London milk is not like what you are used to in the country, Mr. Herold."

"Oh, it is all very nice, I am sure, Miss Filters."

"Are you sure there is nothing else I can do for you, Mr. Herold, before Sarah comes in?"

"O, no, nothing, thank you; I have given you a great deal too much trouble already."

Emma looked so handsome and ladylike that Seton did not at all like the idea of her waiting on him, it seemed much more natural to wait on her, so he got up and held the door open for her when she turned to pass out. Entirely mollified by this attention, Emma swept from the room, having thus laid the foundation of an acquaintanceship destined to be very lasting. Mrs. Filters listened eagerly to her daughter's description of what had taken place, and from this time the intimacy between their lodger and themselves rapidly increased.

Emma gave Seton opportunities of saying a civil word pretty frequently, and he was not unwilling to take advantage of these, the very sight of such a handsome, pleasant girl cheered him, and her voice refreshed him in this London desert.

Mrs. Filters began to think her plot was well

laid, and was meeting with very reasonable success. "Nothing like leaving it to nature; dear, dear, if I had only had such a chance when I was Emma's age," she sighed; and nature was allowed to take her course.

Thus far one plot had prevailed; meanwhile Garston had not been idle. Finding his crude idea of luring Seton into bad company and expensive habits was a failure, he had commenced the development of his more elaborate plan of ruining him; a plan which he hoped would also put some money into his own pocket, if well carried out.

He was now established in chambers in Lincoln's Inn Square, and was nominally still practising his profession, but his real business was speculating in the city.

His scheme with regard to Seton was to induce him to commence a law suit against Mr. Fermor, to compel him to file an account of all moneys that had passed through his hands in his transactions with Mr. Herold, especially of those of which he had been trustee. He knew Mr. Fermor would resist this by every means in his power, as he had picked up some information

which made him sure that there was something wrong in these transactions. As regards Seton, he knew he could not afford to carry on a Chancery suit, and he felt certain from what our hero had told him that Colonel Warrington would not assist him in the matter, so the suit would nearly ruin him as he had not much left to be robbed of; besides it was more than probable that his uncle would disapprove of the suit so much that he would cast him off for entering on it.

As regards Mr. Fermor, he thought that astute gentleman would certainly get the better of Seton, but would be driven to purchase his silence respecting the breach of trust with which he had become acquainted. This breach of trust had been after this manner: with a portion of Mrs. Herold's trust money, Mr. Fermor had purchased a certain annuity from the old Lord Holborn, which if ever the estates got right would become of great value; in that case he had intended to hand over the original sum so expended and keep the annuity for himself; if the annuity did not become valuable, then to hide the theft of this money he must mix up all into a state of

confusion, and so make it in some way seem as if this annuity had been purchased for the protection of the other moneys secured on the estates. It was a dangerous game, but worth playing, as he might gain something like thirty thousand pounds if it was successful. Just now the Holborn Estates were daily increasing in value, and in a short time all would be secure; the unfortunate foreclosure had nearly exposed everything, as the sum that had to be paid out of the gross amount realized was principally that very sum Mr. Fermor had, in plain English, stolen—euphemistically it was a breach of trust. All this was not known to Garston, but something had been revealed by a discharged clerk, and the rest he pieced together from documents and information obtained through Seton. Garston argued to himself that Mr. Fermor, though possibly strong enough to defend himself, would yet be glad not to let this breach of trust be made public, as it would certainly injure his fair fame, and might deprive him of the reversion to the annuity.

Seton was in the habit of dropping in on Garston at his chambers, to ask advice about his

troublesome affairs; he was also glad to have some one to speak to, as his London life was very dull; he belonged to a club, a very good club, but one at which the members never spoke to each other unless formally introduced; he did not play cards, and now he refrained from billiards on account of the expense, so he never picked up acquaintances as men at clubs do who engage in those pastimes; added to this, the dinners were expensive, so he did not much frequent it except just to look at the papers. Therefore, although he did not particularly enjoy the society of his brother-in-law, yet he often looked in on him, as his society was better than none. Garston was always civil, more civil indeed than Seton cared about, for he was always wanting him to dine with him at Richmond, Greenwich, or some famous City or West-end tavern.

Once he did go with him to a celebrated restaurant where seven other guests were assembled, and his sudden acceptance of the invitation spoilt the symmetry of the table. The dinner was elaborate and well served, but the company noisy and vulgar; they drank a great deal of wine after a promiscuous fashion, some

beginning with champagne even with their soup; the consequence was that long before the dessert was reached most of them had thrown off all reserve and while one set played pitch and toss for sovereigns between the courses, another entered into a furious contest as to bulling or bearing certain shares. Stories of sharp practice were gleefully told, odds were laid on every sort of subject, from the forthcoming great race to the verdict on the criminal then under trial, and actresses reputations were freely taken away, as indeed were those of ladies in all classes of society. After dinner, cards were introduced; one set began to play whist while the others betook themselves to écarté; soon these games were voted slow, and all joined in a round game of loo. Seton was pressed to join, but declined, and soon the others had forgotten his existence in the excitement of the play. The room filled with smoke, and Seton walked off, leaving the other seven in full swing of loo, brandies and soda, and tobacco.

It was a description of entertainment our hero took no sort of pleasure in, so in future he declined Garston's invitations, but he continued to

look in and have a chat or get a hint how to fight Fermor.

Utterly wearied out with that gentleman's endless delays, Seton became at last a willing listener to Garston's proposal of setting some one at him to make him render an account.

"File a bill, that will bring him down; when he sees you are determined, he will cave in quick enough;" was Garston's advice.

"But won't it be horribly expensive?"

"Pooh, the cost is nothing; that is just the bugbear people put up. The name of Chancery seems to frighten them, as if just filing a bill in Chancery meant going into a Chancery suit such as people mean by that term. Just file a bill, that is all, he will come down quick enough."

"But suppose he doesn't come down?"

"Never fear, there are deuced few lawyers, and I speak with some experience, who can stand having their transactions overhauled by the Court of Chancery. Lord Holborn's estate is one of the fishiest transactions going. He will come down sharp enough."

"But in any case, I shall have to find the money to bring him down to begin with, and I really have not a five pound note to spare."

"Not a penny, you need not find one penny, any one would be glad to undertake such a case; even if he should be ass enough to fight it, you would be quite safe; they always give costs out of the estate in a case like this—bless you, you have no idea how liberal lawyers are with other people's money—an estate like the Holborn is just a garden of the Hesperides for the legal profession; the present lord doesn't care a hang what happens to it, as he can never get any benefit from it. You see the late lord was an immensely clever man and could not pay attention to such a thing as mere money; he was therefore quite in the hands of Wreckford and Fermor and another firm, who between them managed everything. He was a man of strong principles both political and otherwise; in politics he never forgot to repay an antagonist, and in money matters he never recollected to pay a debt whether small or large. These principles worked his ruin; it is a stupid thing not to see to your spending, and it is absolutely assinine not to keep in with your opponents; treat your friends as you like, but always be agreeable to your foes."

"If things are as you say, and a lawyer is

sure to profit by the transaction, couldn't you file the bill for me?"

"No, it wouldn't do, the Court wouldn't like it; family affair you know. And I ain't fit to carry on business of that sort. Fermor would not be alarmed if my name was to it, he would think it was only to frighten him, that we had no intention of going on. No, no; we must make him think you are serious, and intend to trot out him and his affairs before the Chancellor himself, if need be. That is the way to bring him down. But I tell you what I can do, I can put you in the way of having the thing done properly; I will introduce you to a man who will do it for you, a fellow well up in that sort of business."

"Thank you, I will think it over; you are sure there is no risk?"

"There can't be any, he is bound to give an account; a flourish of trumpets is all that is necessary, then down go the walls, you may depend upon it."

"And you are sure I shall not be called on to find money?"

"Not a penny, Fermor will have to pay the costs."

"I thought you said the Estates would?"

"Did I? I suppose the Estates were running in my head; by Jove, I wish I had a dig out of them."

"Well, but let me be clear about the costs of filing this bill."

"I tell you Fermor will have to pay; what I said, or at any rate what I meant about costs being given out of the Estates was, if in the almost impossible case of Fermor's letting it go into court, it was in any way made out that he had acted in Lord Holborn's interest rather than in yours, I say then the costs would be thrown on the Estates; in any case you cannot have to pay them for you have a right to an account. You must yourself see that you are entitled to an account of the moneys laid out for you—your father is the same thing—by your own trustee and solicitor."

"Yes, I see that."

"Then if he won't furnish such account, you can understand that the law will compel him to, and make him pay the expenses of being so compelled."

"It seems clear enough."

"Oh yes, it is all right. Chancery is not so black as it is painted, at any rate in trifles like this. Why, bless you, bills enough are filed every day, it is quite a matter-of-form sort of proceeding; you want a thing done, you file a bill—the fellow then sees you are in earnest and books up, or does what is wanted; nothing can be simpler. It is just like where a fellow owes a tradesman money: you owe, say your tailor, a long bill, he duns and duns, you put his letters into the fire in winter, the waste paper basket in summer, or light your pipe with them, cut into neat strips; at last he gets angry and sends you a lawyer's letter; then you see he is not to be choused any more, and stump up both amount of bill and lawyer's charge for letter writing. Just so in your case—filing a bill is your lawyer's letter."

"Well," said Seton, "I am much obliged for your advice, I really begin to see that it is simple. Now I will be off."

Garston looked full at Seton, wished him good morning, and said, "believe me, nothing can be simpler."

CHAPTER V.

LEGAL GUNS AND GUNNERS.

THE specious arguments of his brother-in-law prevailed with Seton. "It can do no harm," he thought, "and Fermor and I have long ceased to be on friendly terms. I have tried all I know to get it out of him in a civil manner, now I will go in for a bit of law; set a thief to catch a thief, and by gum, as Guss says, there isn't much difference—who would have thought of Fermor turning out such a do?"

Rather elated at the prospect of a bit of law for which Fermor would have to pay, our hero determined to mulct him in the matter, and sought Garston to get him to introduce him to a person able and willing to undertake the filing of the bill without payment in the present.

Garston was quite prepared to forward him in this matter by every means in his power. He at once took him to a well known legal street not far from Temple Bar, which we will call Kent

Street; there they speedily found, first, a brass plate with the name of Gosling, then Mr. Gosling himself.

The introduction was effected; Garston took his leave, remarking that, "two heads were better than one, but three were worse than none," an aphorism he invented on the spot, and under cover of which he departed.

Alone with Mr. Gosling, Seton entered on a long narration of his wrongs and troubles, to which that solicitor listened with the greatest possible attention, occasionally making notes, and now and then asking questions; but for the most part he let Seton run on and tell his own story without interruption.

At the end of the intricate history, Mr. Gosling expressed an opinion that he thought there would be but little difficulty in the matter; "we will write to him and let him know that we shall be glad to receive the account we wish for, quite in a friendly manner; that will clear the ground—make him show his colours you know—a first shot with blank cartridge, my dear sir." Gosling smiled at his illustration, and rubbed his hands which were small, soft and pudgy. He was a round

pleasant-looking little man with a large forehead that bespoke benevolence—perhaps to himself; he was very neat in his dress, inclined to baldness, but still active looking and with rather a neat foot, of which he was probably aware, as he wore low cut shoes. He had a general air of smoothness and prosperity which gave Seton confidence.

Gosling also pooh pooh'd the idea of Chancery being a thing to be frightened at. "Why, I don't suppose, my dear sir, that one-fiftieth part of proceedings in Chancery ever get beyond the most elementary stages," he said; "if our blank cartridge does not make our friend Fermor heave to, why we shall just file a bill, just send a shot across his bows," and again Mr. Gosling's cheerful face was irradiated at his metaphor.

"I should like to ask you a question as to expense, Mr. Gosling; as I am now situated I am not able to afford myself many luxuries, certainly not that of going to law if I shall have to pay for it. Now, will it be necessary to pay anything for firing these shots?" Here Seton gave in his quota of smile to the simile.

"My dear sir, there is no necessity whatever

for talking about money at this stage of the proceedings, none absolutely, none I assure you. We must carry the war into the enemy's country, and then, you know, we can feed on their crops; ha! ha! that is the way to manage things; we are not above taking hints even from soldiers. Quarter yourself on the enemy is military, but the plan works equally well at law, my dear sir, ha! ha!"

Gosling's laugh was so soft, comfortable, and genial, that Seton felt quite happy, and parted from him with feelings much relieved. Gosling gave him a warm, soft shake of the hand, and he passed out of the office and down the narrow stairs, feeling that he now had Fermor on the hip.

"What is Garston's little game?" thought Gosling; "he must know better than to start his brother-in-law on such a wild goose-chase as fighting Fermor at Chancery. 'Gad, I shall enjoy tickling him, though; one doesn't get a chance at such a fish every day. That young ass is good for costs, I suppose; I must just look up his affairs before we plunge."

Head in air, and feeling very big in that he

had set up a solicitor for himself, Seton walked back all the way to Remington Place, and as it so happened that Mrs. Filters herself let him in, he was glad to seize the opportunity to have a chat with some one about what he had been doing, so he accepted her invitation to take a cup of tea in the front parlour. It was only three o'clock, and in point of fact the tea was not yet ready, but Seton looked so hot and tired with his walk that Mrs. Filters had thought a cup of tea would do him good.

It was not the first time our hero had entered that room for a cup of tea, for he had gradually drifted into almost an intimacy with Mrs. Filters and her daughter. Emma was as pleasant in speech as she was in appearance, and her mother was very friendly, so it had come about that Seton was by no means loth to take refreshment or have a chat with them. To-day he was more talkative than he had ever been before; he was excited with his interview with Gosling, and glad to have an outlet for his feelings.

Mrs. Filters bustled about making the tea, and Emma gave him all her attention.

"It seems bad to go to law, too," said the mother.

Emma turned on her sharply, and asked—

"Why should that Mr. Fermor keep Mr. Herold's money if he hasn't any right with it?"

Mrs. Filters was obliged to own in so many words that rights were rights.

Thus Seton was sustained and upheld in the course he had taken—friendship, law, and beauty, all arrayed on his side, what had he to fear? Garston, Gosling, and Emma were all supporting him, and sympathy in the person of Mrs. Filters, was smiling on him, so Seton drank his tea with a light heart, and made himself very agreeable as his talk of himself and his affairs was really full of interest to his audience.

The law suit henceforth was a strong bond of union between these three; Seton was always happy to talk about it, Mrs. Filters and Emma always glad to listen; consequently the intimacy grew and flourished.

Mrs. Filters was really getting quite fond of our hero, and felt quite motherly towards him. Emma was losing her heart; there was some-

thing in Seton's gentle manner, combined with the way he comported himself, not exactly proudly, but with a sort of loftiness, the like of which she had not seen before; besides his pleasant face and brown curly hair, he possessed the inexplicable charm of good breeding—all these combined to assail Emma's virgin heart.

Emma's experiences of young men had been of people much rougher and more common place, of young fellows who, as compared with Seton, were coarse, good fellows enough, but loud in manner and in dress. One here and there was quiet, but this quiet was from [illegible] which was worse even than boisterousness.

Seton of course had no notion of making any sort of love to Emma; but [illegible]

[illegible]

cally speaking, hold him hard and fast; he had plenty of things to engage his time—what with railway shares, bubble companies, betting on races, and dissipation of all sorts, he had his hands quite full.

At a very early stage of the proceedings it became clear that Mr. Fermor was not going to heave-to for blank ammunition.

Gosling gently smoothed one hand with the other, and said—"My dear sir, we must pop at him with a little shot, then down he will come," here he patted his hands together, giving emphasis to his sentence.

It seemed that in order to pop at him with shot a barrister must be employed, to settle the bill, as Gosling termed it. This occasioned Seton some alarm; he had a notion that these gentry received immense fees before they did any work; but Gosling laughed at this, and explained that there were barristers and barristers; there were brilliant barristers who shone out in the full light of day, and therefore required much gold to adorn and sustain them in their upward flight; those among them who had taken this flight and attained to the glories of Parliament, who were

or who hoped to be in office, required even fabulous sums to secure their services; there were others who had not so soared, but had stuck to earth, and been satisfied with such distinction as coifs and silk robes gave, as leaders of their circuits, and as possible judges in the future procured them—these more modest men in their ambition were still large in their acquisitiveness.

"My dear sir," said Gosling, "we have nothing to do with great guns like these, far feebler artillery will bag our game; they are useful and necessary in great actions—muzzle to muzzle in the courts—but there are plenty of men the world never hears of who are quite as capable of doing real work and giving sound opinions as those we have been speaking of, and these can be had for a very moderate recompense; noise and bluster such as these great guns make must be paid for largely, but it is the cheaper bayonet that gives the home thrust. This little expense won't matter; if our friend Fermor will be obstinate he must pay for it, men usually have to do so; depend on it a firm like theirs cannot go into court."

A certain Mr. Hernshaw was selected as the

man, who for a modest recompense, would do their business. The bill was filed.

And now that astute solicitor, Mr. Fermor, played a trump that rather disconcerted Gosling, who termed his proceeding flooding the trenches; he retired from the firm of Wreckford, Fermor and Blyte, leaving that firm to continue its very lucrative business under the style of Wreckford and Blyte.

This was a serious blow, for with this retirement the whole structure, founded on his not liking to go into court for the sake of the firm, fell to the ground. Now we are in for a fight, thought Gosling, and he smoothed his hands together for a long time. He also pushed on his enquiries as to the substantiality of Seton's affairs, and from what he heard he judged that they were sufficiently favourable to justify him in spending more ammunition. Having eased his mind concerning this matter, Gosling told Seton what had happened, but he laid little stress on it to him.

"Cunning fellow! Fermor got out of the direct line of fire, but it is no use, we shall shell him, my dear sir, we shall just elevate our

mortars, and drop our shell right into his camp."

Seton said dubiously—

"I hope the shell will explode in the right place, not go off and injure the gunners."

"Very good, my dear sir; ve–ry good, indeed; ha! ha!"

The smooth genial laugh was infective, and Seton laughed too, feeling as if he had said something witty.

After that they got on very easily with the arrangements which Gosling had to propose, which was that Seton should write to his sisters, and get their consent to be made co-plaintiffs in the suit.

"Entirely nominal, my dear sir; but Mr. Hernshaw says it is necessary they should be parties to the suit, as they were originally interested in the trust; it is the merest formality, but we must keep our ranks, eh, Mr. Herold? or we should be bad soldiers; you see they must be parties to the suit, and it looks better for them to appear as plaintiffs than as defendants. You can explain that nothing is wanted but just their names."

"Wouldn't it be better for you to write?"

"By no means, my dear sir; if I write they will think there is more in it; no, no, set a lawyer to catch a lawyer, but,"—here Gosling thought, set a fool to catch a fool—"you will be the right person to communicate with your own sisters or their husbands. It is a mere form, and they will understand it as such, coming from you; people are always suspicious of us lawyers, and, my dear sir, I believe they are quite right; plenty of black sheep among us, as well as in other professions, only in other professions they are hardly so powerful for the perpetration of mischief. Now, my dear sir, I must wish you a good morning; look in when you have heard from the ladies, and then we will deploy into line. That is the way to put it, my dear sir, deploy into line, ha! ha! Good morning."

The answers to Seton's letters, which contained full explanations as to the whole matter were as follows:

Wren wrote from Wrencourt thus:—

"My Dear Seton,—

"I fear I am unable to give you any assistance in your law suit, and I take it on my-

self as your brother-in-law, and one a good deal older than you are, to say both on behalf of Elinor and myself, that we think the course you have taken most unadvisable. You say Garston urged you to it; for my part I do not think his advice good to go by in a case like this; lawyers are all for law, as doctors are for dosing, and parsons for preaching. I do not intend to preach myself, but I trust you will reconsider the step you are taking, and for my part I cannot willingly have anything to do with a suit that I entirely disapprove of. Elinor is in perfect accord with me in this matter, but she left me to answer your letter, as it was a matter of business.

"I remain, affectionately yours,

"MONTAGUE WREN."

Sarncombe, now quartered at Gosport, sent the following:—

"MY DEAR SETON,—

"What an extraordinary old buffer you are; do anything rather than go to law. One of our fellows who did a little kite flying, came to awful grief because he would fight some beggar about a bill he hadn't signed. We all advised

him not, but he stuck out that he hadn't signed it; and by George, sir, the beggar had him into court, set one of those bull-dog fellows at him, who so mauled him that he had to send in his papers. I don't believe he did sign it, but by George, sir, they turned him inside out, even twisting out of him things that had been buried years before; no fellow could stand that sort of thing. You say you are all right, but by George, sir, he thought so too. Pitch it up, never fight a lawyer, he is sure not to be on the square; there is sure to be some dashed roping or other. I own I am afraid to go in for it even as a matter of form.

"Harriet is gone to see Dora, who is down again; why on earth do clergymen always have such a lot of children? Harriet told me to say don't go into Chancery, and by George, it makes me shudder to think of it; compared to Chancery blind hookey is a profitable and harmless pastime. Good-bye old Seton, and don't be an idiot.

"Ever yours affectionately,

"GEORGE SARNCOMBE."

The other answer was written by Hodges—

"My Dear Seton,—

"I am truly thankful to say that your dear sister is now safely over her confinement, and I have been able to broach to her your terrible determination to invoke the aid of the law in settling your dispute with Mr. Fermor. We both beseech you to leave the settlement of your affairs to an overruling Providence, rather than appeal to the strong arm of the law. My brother James, who we have consulted, informs me that even if you succeed there can be no benefit to us; so why should we do that which might endanger the little we possess? You say there is no possible risk to us in giving our adhesion to the proceedings in Chancery, and it may be so; but in justice to our babes we cannot undertake the risk of your being incorrect in that assertion.

"I pray that you may think better of your project, and that if you persist in it it will have a successful issue. But you cannot reasonably expect us to enter upon a course that may be fraught with peril to us and our little ones.

"Your sister Harriet, I find, quite agrees with us in this matter. With our prayers for your welfare, believe me to remain, my dear Seton,

"Yours in all affection,

"THOMAS HODGES."

* * * * *

The advice contained in these letters was perhaps sound; at any rate, the letters were full of thoughtfulness for the welfare of the writers, as well as that of Seton, but he had passed the point of wishing for advice on the subject—the suit was commenced, he now wanted assistance, and they had all refused this. Garston was the only one who seemed to stand by him, so to Garston he went and showed him the letters he had received from his other brothers-in-law towards whom he was feeling very bitter; they had been told positively that the giving of their names would in no way affect them, it was impossible it could do so; also that their names must appear, if not as plaintiffs and apparently with him, then as defendants and presumably against him; consequently Seton felt very sore.

Garston laughed at the letters, said they were

not much different from what he would have expected, and that it did not matter a rap—plaintiffs or defendants it was quite nominal, like lots of the other rubbish of the law. "Better go and see Gosling, there is nothing more to be done about it. I am off to a meeting of the Compressed Rails and Continuous Sleepers Company. No use asking you to join us at Richmond, I suppose, next Sunday. No; well, ta ta."

Gosling smoothed his hands, and agreed that it was a matter of no great importance. "You have, my dear sir, so far cleared the ground; they are informed of your proceeding, and they could have been plaintiffs if they chose. I will see Hernshaw about it, and put it all straight. Our ranks are thinned, but only of non-combatants; now, Mr. Herold, we will close our ranks, and shoulder to shoulder, eh? that is the way isn't it, ha, ha,—good morning, my dear sir, good morning."

They did deploy into line, the ranks were closed, the mortars fired, and the bayonets fixed; with what result we shall hear in future chapters. Just now we must leave the regions of Chancery for another a good way off.

CHAPTER VI.

PROSE AND POETRY.

ALTHOUGH we have heard nothing of Ralph Lacy for some considerable time, it must not, therefore, be inferred that no communication between him and Seton had taken place. On the contrary, a good many letters had passed between them, usually very brief, and their contents not worth recording.

The first winter after Ralph had parted from Seton, he passed at Penzance; last winter he had been at Nice, and from there several short scrawls had reached Seton, containing accounts of his journey to that place, and descriptions of people and scenery in and about that city, written in almost joyous spirits.

"The warm sun," he said, "had quite revived him; they had eaten green peas on Christmas day, and only fancy," he wrote, "as I sit here on the fourth of January, I smell new mown hay. We, that is my sister Emily and myself, are

domiciled in a flat of a large house, and from the balcony we can see the sea, and inhale the fresh crisp air. Emily keeps a very tight hand on me, I assure you. I no more dare go out without a wrapper in my pocket, if not round my neck, than I durst have shirked parade. Talking of parade, I have cut the army altogether; had I not done so of my own accord, I don't think the chief would have stood my constant sick leave much longer; now I feel free, and am going in for poetry, so look out for Poems and Lyrics by an Ex-liner. Good title, isn't it? Would you have a portrait of the Ex-liner as a frontispiece? It might add to the sale. In all seriousness I intend to buckle to and see if my head-piece is up to the mark."

* * * * *

This was the sort of way he wrote, half joking and half serious. For some weeks nothing had come from him, and Seton, who had written several times, was feeling uneasy about him owing to this silence.

On returning home after the interview with Gosling just described, Seton found quite a

thick packet had arrived for him from Ralph. Surely, thought he, this must be a portion of his long-talked-of poem; that is what has kept him silent for so long, he has been hard at it. There was an inner packet, and a note which was from Ralph, and thus worded—

"DEAR OLD HEROLD,—

"Here we are in Switzerland up a mountain; the place is called Glyon, and it is very pleasant, just a scrubby village with something of a hotel at each end. We are, I forget how many feet above the level of the lake, but it was an awful pull to get up. Montreux is under our feet, Chillon looks like a speck in the water, and the whole valley at the head of the lake is like a map, with the course of the river and the road marked on it distinctly. Above us a lane leads up to goodness knows where; I don't climb, it takes it out of me too much, and my sister won't let me attempt it, so I just sit about in the sun. Emily is always at hand with a shawl or something for me to sit on, also the eternal wrapper of which I have before told you. There are several pleasant people here,

and we are rather like one family of disorderly children.

"I have not made much progress in the poetic line yet, but I intend doing great things, and I enclose some of my minor efforts for your perusal, trusting to find in you a stern critic, but an upright judge; deal with me not in mercy, but with justice: I prefer being slain by a friend to being scalped by an unknown hand. I also send you a full, true, and particular sketch of our departure from Nice, and progress along the cornice. If you don't like my poetry, I hope you will at least be grateful for my prose. I felt that I had treated you shabbily of late, so I have now made up for it, perhaps you will think too liberally. And now, dear old boy, good-bye. Let me hear how you and Fermor get on. I would send my love to Miss Clifford, only I well know your nasty jealous disposition.

"Ever very sincerely yours,

"RALPH LACY.

"P.S.—Emily says she trusts, as a friend of mine you will send me a scolding for being careless about my wrapper."

Such was Ralph's letter. Seton admired the

poems very much, and sent a favourable review of them to his friend. Of the prose a sample is given.

* * * * *

"The place now having become windy, dusty and hot, we determined to move, so Emily, who is a capital hand at a bargain, agreed with a driver to take us over the mountain to Mentone. We were to start early; the driver, with an excellent pair of horses and a comfortable carriage, was punctual, but, alas! my hat was not. This hat was a new one, made of fine felt, and with a brim about ten inches wide to shade my complexion from the sun. We had taken leave of the fattore, of the old gardener, his wife, and his daughter, also of the son and our servant; I say servant, because we had really only one; she was a wonderful woman who lived on bread sopped in oil, and took her meals from a soup plate at odd times—on the staircase, in the kitchen, or in the garden as the fancy seized her; indeed, she generally was oiling herself; even when our grandest acquaintances, Lord and Lady Greatpark, called, I, looking from behind the blinds, distinctly saw her standing at the front door chewing at an oily

crust, as she pointed to them to walk upstairs. She cooked and housemaided us, waited at table, and cleaned everything from floors to boots; her marketing was her strong point, she would at any time buy the stringiest and most bony produce, if she could thereby save three sous. Once she came back triumphant with a goose she had bought for five francs, and I give you my word there was not enough on it even to furnish a pretence for a dinner for us two.

"Excellent creature, we knew she had tippled our wine, robbed us in every way she could, had frequently lost letters and newspapers, had cracked much and broken more, and had lied consistently; still, when the hour for parting came, when we knew we should in all probability never again set eyes on her, our hearts grew soft, we felt sorry, and gentle feelings rose up in us as she stood at the door with tears in her eyes and an uncared-for sop in her oily hand. They were all there, the fattore, the gardener, the gardener's wife, Francesca the handsome daughter, and Antoine the unruly son, as well as Blanche our domestic. We really felt like Proprietors blessed and speeded on their way by a loving tenantry.

"Blanche, as I said, was in tears; Francesca was in a straw hat with a gauze veil to it that had belonged to Emily; Antoine was in very little besides trousers and a red cap. As we came out bowing, the fattore presented Emily with a bouquet, Francesca gave me one, and we got into the carriage. So far all went well; but just as I had broken my shin over Emily's bonnet box, she found out my new hat was not come, and instead of our being driven off amid the bows and tears of the assembly, there we had to stick for nearly half an hour, during which I rubbed my shin and looked benignant alternately. Smiles ceased to come, and tears refused to flow; certainly it is difficult to go on crying when there is nothing to cry about, and to continue smiling for half an hour I hold to be impossible. Just try it the first dull day.

"A miserable boy, who had probably been playing games or fighting on the road, at last appeared with my hat, and we drove off; but the whole effect was necessarily spoilt.

* * * * *

"'Turbia is a windy place;' this I got out of the guide book; and I have cause to know that it

is true, for there, close to the old tower, my new hat blew away, and I don't imagine I shall recover it as, according to the same authority, the tower stands eighteen hundred feet above the sea, and the hat has fallen on a spot only three or four hundred feet higher than the sea level.

* * * * *

"Mentone is a poor sort of town, with a tolerable hotel, a visitors' book, and a fountain. The two latter interest me, as I cannot walk up the hills, and there is no level ground. From my window I see the fountain round which groups constantly collect, and very reluctantly disperse: these are very amusing, but the visitors' book is more so, people write such absurdities. Much ingenuity, too, is shown in varying the same information; following each other, three people write—'We found the inn cleanly' . . . . . 'I can recommend the hotel for its cleanness'. . 'My wife and me liked the clean-ess(!) of this house.'

* * * * *

"San Remo was our next stage, and here I took to a donkey, determined to see something of the town, which is all uphill. The streets are so

narrow, that I am quite sure two fat men could not pass each other in a legitimate way; my donkey was a very small one, yet my knees rubbed against both walls. It was quite a relief to pass a doorway. These streets seem to be subways driven through the cellars of the houses which rise in arches above your head; when at last you do emerge from them the views are splendid, and, oh! to breathe the fresh air again after an atmosphere combined of garlic, dirt, and salted fish!

* * * * *

"We took very short stages, slept at both Oneglia and Alassio, then we came on to Albenga. At Alassio we slept in a palace, at Albenga in a cottage, the little rooms of which were white-washed, and contained for furniture one bed each, one chair, and one table. We eat in one of these rooms, combining our chairs, and we mused on the evanescence of human pomp, for at Alassio our dining room had been a splendid saloon of great size, two or three stories high, and painted all over with birds and leaves and clouds.

"You will remember that we left Nice in a good carriage and pair—very fine! so fine and good

that we got the driver to bring us on to San Remo. There, however, he deserted us, having, he said, another engagement; so we were compelled to hire afresh, and a very fierce bargain we had to secure a very seedy carriage and pair to take us to Oneglia. From there to Alassio even this dwindled to a one-horse rattle-trap that seemed likely to resolve itself into its component parts at each jolt; the amount of chaffering to secure this vehicle was prodigious. The driver began by asking more than the Nice fellow had required—much more. He tore his hair and beat his breast. I recommended Emily to take down her back hair and shriek, but as she would not do that, I had to simulate violent passion, stamp and jabber long words of resonance, which stood in lieu of swearing. Of course it was all right in the end, but it was troublesome.

"We arrived at Alassio in this grand equipage, but we had to depart on foot; there was not so much as a wheelbarrow to be had; the distance to Albenga was luckily only some seven miles, so we started on foot, an obliging boy carried a small bag, and the rest of our luggage was supposed to be on a *diligence*. I had hoped

to manage the seven miles on my legs, but not being in training, I broke down, and had to charter a mule, which we met loaded with oranges. I wish you had seen my entry into Albenga; first came Emily; then I, mule, oranges and all; bringing up the rear was a splendid female peasant with flowers in her hair, and two boys, ages three and five. Quite Bacchanalian!

* * * * *

"Savona was reached *summâ diligentiâ*. I am thankful to say Emily pretended not to know the old schoolboy joke, which came in wonderfully well here, for Albenga, according to the guide book, was a rival of Carthage, so Hannibal naturally turned up and came in handy. By the way, Albenga is a town of towers, very ancient and walled, with a river and meadows full of narcissus; there should by rights be sea, but it has modestly retired some three miles, leaving the poor Albengese high and dry. We much admired the colours of the umbrellas, and the rich hues of the people. The beggars were beyond description, so you will escape hearing about them.

"Of Savona I saw nothing, as the hotel is outside it, and we went on again immediately.

What is of importance is the fact of our finding our baggage here all right, except Emily's bonnet box, which is stove in. She bore the misfortune with equanimity, saying she liked choosing a new bonnet, that the one in the box was rubbish, and that I could get her a strong box at Genoa.

"Genoa . . . . . .

"See Guide Book.

* * * * *

"Milan . . . . . .

"Do.

* * * * *

"Simplon . . . . . .

"Do.

* * * * *

"More some other time, and you have my leave to publish this on half shares!"

CHAPTER VII.

"OTHER LIPS AND OTHER HEARTS."

THE inhabitants of 8, Remington Place continued to get on very comfortably together. Mrs. Filters was quite happy. Referring to Seton, she soliloquized—

"He couldn't be a greater comfort to me if he was my own son. Hey dear me, it seems too good to be true; never out of nights, doesn't smoke, wipes his feet regularly, and has no bad 'abits that I can set an eye on; hey dear me!"

The repetition of this "hey dear me" was caused by Mrs. Filters' feelings being deeper than she could express in words.

Emma came in, and her mother, regarding her with an air of pride, smoothed her hair with an affectionate hand, and said—

"It is that soft and glossy, it beats floss silk; I never saw such 'air as yours, Emma; I don't know where you get it from—your father's was very dark, but not to say soft, and mine can't

hold a candle to yours; I never did see such 'air; I think it must be the oil that does it—I saw you had a bottle of that What's-his-name's stuff in your room."

"Nonsense, mother; you may allow me the credit of my own hair, and I do wish you would not leave out the 'h's' so, it makes me quiver, and Mr. Herold must think it so odd."

"Mr. Herold don't think it hodd at all; it's only my own daughter who thinks it hodd," replied Mrs. Filters, angrily; "you ought to be the last person to twit your mother; it isn't often I drop one, and I am to old too go to school and learn afresh; a haytsch more or less is not the thing to come between mother and daughter; it isn't haytsches that make the difference, it is 'earts."

Emma, sorry at having entered on a subject that she knew of old provoked her mother more than any other, but feeling that her hair had been unjustly treated to begin with, held out an olive branch so far as to say—

"Well, mother, I didn't mean to put you out, but really couldn't you manage just to say 'h's' when Mr. Herold is with us?"

"You are an ungrateful girl; I don't believe I have called him 'Erold more than twice since he has been with us, although it would be more comfortable. Say haytsches indeed; why I do say haytsches always, only sometimes they don't sound out. Mr. Herold is too much of a gentleman to care about such trifles as that. Why, all people talk different; ain't there foreign languages? and ain't Londoners as good as the best? I should like to know where's a finer place than London, with its St. Paul's, the Naticnal Gallery, and the Tower; tell me that, Emma. Towns aint built of haytsches."

"But gentlefolk always talk the same; of course I mean real English gentlefolk."

"Now mind you this, Emma: we ain't gentlefolk, and don't set up to be; you have had a good education, and, though I say it, you are the equal of any lady; but don't pretend to be real gentlefolk until you are one. I don't say that won't be so; till then 'old up your 'ead with the best, but don't be presumptuous."

Rather awed at this lecture, and inwardly feeling that she was not absolutely perfect herself, Emma lowered her colours. She knew how

good her mother was to her, and that apart from h's she was faultless; even on this head she was not so bad as most of their friends, for she very seldom put in one, only when excited; so Emma placed herself before her mother, put her hands together, and said—

"There, mother, I have been naughty, give me a kiss; you have scolded me enough." And her mother did as Emma suggested.

Peace being quite restored, the late belligerents got talking of Seton—as indeed was not uncommon, for the thoughts of both ran very much in his direction. They agreed that he was looking mopish, and that a day in the country would do him a deal of good. They also thought it would be an excellent thing if he could be induced to take pleasure in the country in their society. No open mention was made of conquering him, but it had become an understood thing between them that Seton was to be brought nearer and dearer if possible. No word had been said, and no treaty signed, but mother and daughter were not the less parties to a solemn compact, of which Seton was the subject.

Much talk ensued. It would never do to go

just those three together, that was evident. Mrs. Filters suggested that Garston, who occasionally called on Seton, should be invited, but Emma strongly objected—

"Not if I know it, mother; the impudent fellow! When I accidentally met him in the passage one day, he called me Jemima, and wanted to kiss me. Jemima, indeed!"

It ended in a determination to invite their cousins, the Blessets; at least, Mrs. Blesset was a cousin of Mrs. Filters. Mr. Blesset was quite the gentleman—manager to Jones and Jones, the great brokers. Jack, the son, was a clerk in the same house, and a rattling young fellow—he would keep the party alive.

So Seton was informed that they were going down to Richmond to have a look at the park, and eat their dinner under the trees—just themselves and their cousins, the Blessets—he was manager in a great city house; would Seton join them, and have a breath of sweet air?

He consented gladly. The weather was hot; Richmond, trees, and out-door dinner sounded pleasant; he never thought of refusing—he would far rather eat his dinner with those he looked on

as plain, honest, middle-class people, than dine sumptuously with Garston and his set of cads.

A very fine day came opportunely. Mr. and Mrs. Blesset and Jack arrived in their best array. They were to go by water as far as Kew Bridge; from the steamer they were to find their way to Richmond Park as best they could. The dinner had been sent on in a 'bus, in charge of a young man from the greengrocer's, who had undertaken to meet them with it at a given spot in the Park; he was a very respectable young man—waited at parties, and could be thoroughly depended on.

Mr. Blesset proved to be a chatty, pleasant man, with a great idea of his own superiority; on this occasion he was freely conceded the first place, so he was happy, content, and agreeable—he had cast off the cares of office, and was ready to enjoy himself, and devote his great energies to such good things as might be forthcoming; he knew Mrs. Filters was an excellent caterer, and his heart was light.

Jack was a young fellow of twenty-two, a wiry little fellow, and full of fun; if a little loud at times, the girls of his acquaintance

thought none the worse of him for that. "He is always such good company," was the verdict given by such juries of young ladies as sat on his merits or defects.

In accordance with custom, Mrs. Blesset should have been first mentioned, but really there was nothing to say about her—she was not a remarkable personage, except perhaps, for her fidgetiness — she constantly thought she had lost something, or forgotten something, or that she was not right behind. Jack was a very good son to her in these matters, looked her over from a back point of view, pinned her up, and soothed her. When so engaged, he repaid himself for these civilities by winking at other members of the party.

In excellent spirits these six excursionists started from Remington Place, caught the boat at Hungerford Market, and commenced their day's pleasure. Seton had never been up the river before, and enjoyed the trip immensely. Arrived at Kew, they all agreed that it would be pleasant to walk through the Botanical Gardens, leave them by the river gate, and so on by the towing path to Richmond. Jack knew the way,

and on leaving the Gardens he took the lead on the towing path, having secured Emma for his companion—Mrs. Filters and Mr. Blesset followed, and Seton had charge of Mrs. Blesset. That good lady entertained our hero with stories of the misconduct of her servants, praises of Jack, and other equally enlivening topics, so he was free to look about him and admire the scenery. Now and then his attention was required just to see if his companion's dress was not scraping the ground. She would say—

"Would you be so obliging, Mr. Herold, as just to see if I ain't draggling?"

Seton, looking intently from behind, would see very clearly two stoutish boots well filled, and about four inches of plump white stocking above, so he was able to report that there was no draggling. Twice a glove was supposed to be lost, and once a smelling bottle; on investigation, these effects were found to be safe somewhere, but it took a good deal of hunting, for she seemed to have pockets all over her, each full of small articles such as keys, needle cases, scissors, sticking plaster, halfpence, yard measure, tape, purse, pocket book, and at least three handker-

chiefs, also lozenges and a paper of pins. Once the whole party had to stop, for Mrs. Blesset lost her collar. This was really gone from her neck, for the brooch had become undone, and the collar had flown down the bank of the river, where Seton could not reach it. Jack managed to fish it up with his father's walking-stick, then he put it on his mother again, and refastened the brooch, remarking—

"Why mother, if you go dropping your things about like this, Mr. Herold will think it's a dodge to get left alone with him." Here Jack winked at Seton, and continued, "I am up to these sort of plants, Emma is always trying it on with me."

His mother gave him a good slap; and Emma flushing up repudiated the idea, declared she would not walk with him any more, and took Mr. Blesset's arm. The incorrigible Jack again winked at Seton, laughed, and said—

"Just what I was trying for, come along Mrs. Filters; Emma is very well, but she'll never equal her mother."

With such-like vulgar but cheerful chat and incident, the party gained the terrace and passed on

into the park. The young greengrocer was true to his appointment. The place of meeting was just beyond Earl Russell's house, where the oak trees, not very large but very picturesque, give pleasant shade, and the view over the deer park and the distant valley is very beautiful. There they unpacked the basket, Jack making himself the coadjutor of the young greengrocer, while Seton assisted Emma to lay the cloth and array the knives and forks, the glasses and the plates.

Mr. Blesset was given a tree trunk to lean against, on his right was Mrs. Filters, on his left was Emma, then came Seton; opposite on the lower ground were Mrs. Blesset and Jack, the former on a rug, the latter on the basket upside down; Mrs. Filters and Emma were accommodated with roots of the tree and their own shawls, Emma was raised rather high, and Seton was at her feet sitting on a newspaper. The dinner was capital; Mrs. Filters had done the thing right well—veal and ham pie, cold ducks stuffed, lobster salad with plenty of dressing in a pickle bottle, lamb, and mint sauce in another bottle—all as complete and proper as the Lord

Mayor himself could have wished; this was the verdict of Mr. Blesset, who wound up his opinion with—

"I must say, Caroline, you are the best manager I ever did know, you never forget anything."

This was double-barrelled—a compliment to his wife's cousin and a cut at his wife. The wife was meek and had commenced eating, so she said nothing; the cousin blushed, and said, "it was a pleasure to do things for some people," then reflecting that the pic-nic had by no means been got up to pleasure the Blessets, she coloured more, and to cover her confusion, called on Jack to open the wine.

Over the good things they all waxed merry; the walk had been long and the sun hot, so the stout was found very sustaining and the champagne most refreshing. Jack made jokes and his mother got wrong with her glasses, she mixed her liquors, but her son assured her it did not matter whether they were mixed inside or out. Mr. Blesset looked after himself, and wandered from pie to salad *viâ* lamb, and so back to duck, on a sort of system known only to himself;

he stuck to sherry; stout and champagne were well enough, no doubt, but sherry was safer, and he never mixed.

Emma and Seton helped each other, and tiffed over the last remaining duck's wing—each wanted the other to eat it. Jack declared if they did not settle their dispute he would take to it, so Emma had to give in, saying to Jack—

"You are a greedy thing, rather than you should have it, I will take it."

"What rum fish these girls are, Mr. Herold, ain't they," quoth Jack; "she declared she didn't want it, and to prevent my having it there she is tucking it down and calling me greedy; good, isn't it? Never mind, Emma, wash it down;" and Emma did not mind, and did wash it down with another glass of champagne. That wine may not have been the best of its sort, and Mr. Blesset was probably quite right in sticking to the sherry, but to the young people it was as nectar, and it was sufficiently generous to unlock their lips and open their hearts.

Dinner ended, Jack proposed toasts, and from a basket of strawberries which formed part of their dessert, he took vine leaves and constructed

a wreath for Emma; the wreath was not perhaps artistic, but the leaves set off her shining tresses, and with her rich complexion and bright eyes she looked quite the queen that Jack proclaimed her.

"Now," said Jack, "let your subjects kiss your hand; and first he, then Seton performed this act of homage, the elders looking on and laughing at the play; even Mr. Blesset, as he used his toothpick, smiled approvingly.

Just as Seton had finished his part in the ceremony, as he rose from his bended knee he heard behind him a laugh, and turning round he saw at a little distance three or four men grouped together. He had just time to notice that one of these was Garston, when they disappeared among the trees. Emma had heard the laugh, and perceived that they were observed, so she took off the wreath, saying—

"We must not be so foolish out here in public, what will people think?" She saw Seton looked disconcerted, so she rated Jack—"You are always so stupid with your nonsense."

The young greengrocer cleared away, the ladies retired to a little distance, leaving the gentlemen

to smoke. Then they again joined company, and Jack entertained the party with recitations, imitations of well known actors, and of birds and beasts.

As evening drew on they left the park, descended the hill, and took tea at one of the minor hotels; then they set off to walk back to Kew by the river. But when they got as far as the Green, Mr. and Mrs. Blesset both declared themselves unequal to further walking, so it was settled that they should return to London by omnibus, while the others walked to Kew and got home as chance offered.

Mrs. Filters was feeling rather pricky about the legs, and would gladly have taken to the 'bus, "but," she argued to herself—"if I leave Emma and both of them to walk together, where is the good of the picnic?" and if they all returned by 'bus the same objection remained. She hoped much from this moonlight walk, so like a brave woman and a good mother she took Jack firmly by the arm and led the way from the Green down to the towing path—she knew it would be a long round, but duty must be done.

Seton and Emma were soon alone, for Miss

Filters was good strategist enough to get Seton and herself left well behind; the reflection of the moon in the water, the passing boats often with music on board, were excuses sufficient for loitering and listening; the shadows of the trees on the path were startling, and the path itself was uneven, so she had to accept Seton's arm, and when a frog hopped out of their way, it was wholly natural that she should give a little scream, and cling to her companion with both hands.

The feeling of affording aid and protection is very pleasant, when that protection is given to a young and beautiful woman the sensation is particularly agreeable; Emma's fine eyes looked larger and still more beautiful in the moonlight, her voice had tender tones in it as she leant on Seton's arm, and looked into his face.

They only spoke of ordinary topics, but her heart was saying all sorts of tender things through the medium of her eyes.

He had never felt so spooney as he did now upon this towing path. The moon was shining full into a face fair enough to make the sternest philosopher forget all worldly wisdom and re-

member only that he was mortal; her pressure was thrilling through his veins.

"How beautiful you are, Emma," escaped his lips, when he only meant to say it in his thoughts.

She did not answer save with a warmer pressure of his arm.

Music was on the water, the boats went gliding by, the ripples shone like diamonds, the moon ruled all the sky and lit a very love path on the river. Emma's face, beaming with love and light, was looking into his, with eyes swimming in ecstacy at the first word of admiration he had ever addressed to her—the excitement of the day . . . . . the time . . . . . the place . . . . . the scene . . . . . all combined to overcome our hero's senses for the moment; once before he had been indiscreet, and had suffered for it, but in this moment he had no memory, no thought save for that face which was looking love at his, for that form round which his arm now glided . . . . . his lips met Emma's, and a long, sweet kiss that never should have existed was exchanged!

The thing was done and could never be re-

called; it was a very living kiss which no wiping of the lips could kill, no afterthought obliterate.

From one of the boats there came a laugh; for the second time to-day, Garston's laugh grated harshly on Seton's ear!

He shivered as he heard it.

"Are you cold?" whispered Emma in a voice the intonation of which translated into words meant, I would warm you with my heart's blood if there was need. She was completely won with that kiss, she thought it meant all that she wished. She did not heed that he spoke no other word of love to her, strove for no further token of her affection; her heart was very full, and she was quite satisfied to walk that long walk in silence, holding his arm and thinking how lovely the night and all things were. She could feel him—he was hers—silence was music.

When at last they rejoined Jack and Mrs. Filters, there was a look of supreme happiness in Emma's face that quite assured her mother the pic-nic and the walk had not been in vain.

They found a carriage at Kew and drove home to Remington Place. Mrs. Filters was dreadfully tired, the pricking in her legs had turned to

numbness, still she managed to keep awake so as to talk to Jack. The latter guessed how things were going, and helped to keep up the talk, under cover of which Emma and our hero were able to be silent.

When they parted, Jack whispered to his cousin, "I suppose I may congratulate you."

"None of your nonsense, Jack," replied Emma, but she said it very softly; and she went to bed feeling this had indeed been a happy day.

Her mother asked no question, but smoothed her hair as it lay upon the pillow, kissed her very tenderly, and left her to her dreams.

CHAPTER VIII.

RESULTS OF A DAY AT RICHMOND.

THE next morning Seton awoke with a headache and a horrible feeling on him that he had made an ass of himself. He blamed Mrs. Filters and the champagne; "why the goodness had she given champagne?—that stuff always did disagree with him."

Gradually the recollection of the events of yesterday came back to him; the remembrance of the kiss returned to him and did not help to cool his fevered lips. With memory came vexation unto bitterness in that he recollected Garston's laughter, and knew he must have seen enough of what had taken place to raise that laughter. "If," thought he, "I must needs play the fool in the park, I need not, at any rate, have played the villain by the river side; what right had I to kiss her?"

Then his memory showed him the beautiful face as it had appeared turned to the full moon

with all the light of love swimming in its eyes, and he ceased to wonder that he had been villain enough to give and receive that momentous kiss. It was a thing he had no right to do, that he felt clearly, but he also felt that the aggravation to this social crime had been very great.

After a fashion he managed to excuse himself for the kiss, but there was no excuse for what had happened afterwards. True, he had borne himself reticently, and had not not given way to further incriminatory acts during the rest of that moonlight walk; but why had he so stultified himself as to hold Emma's hand in his during a great part of the drive home?

Here, again, Seton was mean enough to try and lay the blame on Mrs. Filters; "why couldn't she have sat with Emma on the back seat instead of making him go there?"—and here, being quite in the wrong, he felt really angry—he did not in the least suspect Mrs. Filters of plotting against him, but he looked upon her as an incarnation of destiny which had fought against him. "Why should she prefer sitting with her back to the horses?" . . . . . and then he recollected that she had called them 'orses.

Conscience was not to be appeased by this crude reasoning; even granting all he said, it was not necessary or in any way a sequence of Mrs. Filters' preferring the front seat that he should hold Emma's hand in his beneath the cover of the darkness and the corner of her shawl. At the time he had enjoyed the pressure of those soft clinging fingers, he had been tired and sleepy, Jack talked aloud to Mrs. Filters, and he just conversed silently with Emma; he hated talking while a vehicle was rattling over stony roads, so he had said what just then occurred to him by silent pressure of her hand, that was all. Well, it is true that such was all as far as he was concerned—it was all, and it was ended. But how about Emma?

At the very time Seton was lying in his bed accusing Mrs. Filters, and excusing himself, for the last night's lapses, while he was lying there feverish and fretful, Emma was thinking over the events of the previous evening in a very different mood. She was not feverish or fretful; she lay with her luxuriant masses of dark hair thrown over the white pillow, the wind from the open window stirred stray locks and waved them

to and fro upon her forehead, her eyes were closed, and the long lashes that fringed them made soft crescents on her cheeks, her mouth was parted with a tender smile which hovered round its curves.

Emma was very handsome and now her beauty had expanded; what it sometimes had lacked in softness was now supplied, love had entered in and softened all asperities. Her eyes were closed, but only that she might see the better. She had risen and looked into the glass to see if she was the same Emma who had been there the previous morning, before all this had happened, for thus she thought of it . . . . . all this—was her thought. She could not know or even imagine how differently Seton was regarding it.

Satisfied with her mirrored face she had brushed out her hair, set open the window to let in the sweet breath of summer, and returned to bed to think it all over once again, to see with her closed eyes the shining river, the gliding boats, and his face looking into hers; to hear in the stillness of this morning hour his voice repeating "how beautiful you are;" to feel again his kiss upon her lips; then those lips parted as though receiving that gauge of love once more.

The drive home had been as a drive in fairy land, her hand in his; the pressure of his fingers, the feeling that he had conquered her and would be for all her life her lord, had been very sweet. Had been and was; still she felt that hand clasp, and the sweetness of the kiss still lingered on her lips; there could be but one meaning in these things—he was hers and she was his.

She lay there for hours day dreaming, perfectly content and happy.

Seton, after vainly endeavouring to get another nap to rid him of his headache, found there was nothing for it but to get up and try cold water. The remedy was partially successful. Then a feeling came on him that he would get out of the house and so place some amount of space between him and the Filters's.

The wretch actually thought of Emma as one of the Filters's. She lay thinking of him as something better and more glorious than anything ever before made in the shape of man, while he stole downstairs and out into the street with a feeling of relief at being for a time clear of the Filters's.

It was only eight o'clock when he had descended

and gained the open air. It was too early to go to his club and breakfast, so he refreshed himself with twopenny worth of milk at a small shop, and went for a good walk over the wilds of Hampstead.

As his brain got into proper working order again, he felt more and more sorry for what had happened, but he saw no way of undoing the mischief that kiss and hand-squeezing had effected.

A vision of Gladys came before him, of Gladys as he had always known her, of that gentle, lovely, fair face with its dimples and its sweetness. Was it possible that those earnest blue eyes could light up with anger if she heard of his misdeeds? he had never seen her even cross and could not imagine her angry; but she might be sorrowful, and that would be worse than anger. "Oh, Gladys, my love," he cried out loud, "my darling, my heart's treasure, that I should ever make you sad by my misconduct; idiot that I am."

He had no feeling for poor Emma—he never guessed how deeply she was smitten; he was not a woman slayer, he was as innocent minded a young man as could anywhere be found; he

would have been the last to try and steal a love he meant to cast aside, or treat with usage harder than neglect. He had been thoughtless, but not wicked; had he known anything of Emma's love for him, he would have guarded every action—unfortunately for her he had never guessed it. He had kissed her, and held her hand in his; he was very sorry that he had done so, but he had no idea what these things implied to her. He thought, though foolish, they were not important, and would be as easily forgotten by her as by himself; girls like that sort of thing by moonlight. The moonlight was gone, the kiss was given, the hand pressure over, all that was ended, no one was the worse.

What he was fearing was that in some way the knowledge of these things would reach Gladys; of late he and Garston had not been on very friendly terms. During the last week or two Garston had been much irritated at the way things were going on in the city, and Seton, on looking in on him one morning, had found him in a snarling humour, and unable to conceal his usually suppressed dislike of his brother-in-law. The affairs of the Compressed Rails and

Continuous Sleepers Company had gone awry, and Seton had added fuel to Garston's smouldering fires by advising him not to dabble too much in such-like risky things.

Garston, disgusted at this curt summarization of his principal pursuits, had blazed up, and thus spurtled Seton—"You are a pretty fellow to give me advice; you talk to me of risky things, indeed—you of all people in the world! By gad, you are a clever fellow; because you lie idle expecting a fortune to fall into your lap, because you, forsooth, are a fine gentleman, and never did a turn of work in your life, other people are not to use their brains! By gad, this is good coming from you; risky things, indeed! Why what can be so risky as a Chancery suit? You leave my affairs alone, and I will leave your's."

Seton had been quite astounded at this tirade. Here he was bespattered with accusations and statements, each of which nearly took his breath away. Why Garston was the very man who had advised him to commence the Chancery suit; leave his affairs alone! . . . . . Why, was not the speaker of those words the identical individual who had so mixed himself in his affairs

that he had surrendered his own judgment, and embarked on a law suit, which otherwise he never would have undertaken.

Then there was the statement that he was idle, and Garston could not have touched a sorer place in all his system, for it was true; so true, and so distressing a truth, that he never ceased to mourn the fact; his idleness was embittering his whole life, it was the one thing he could not get over; he would willingly have worked, but he was unfit for any such work as was suitable to him. He had looked forward to leading a useful country life, seeing after his estate, and doing all he could to make those around him happy. Now circumstances had ousted him from the country, and driven him into London, where he was a drone in that busy hive. His present idleness was wholly distasteful to him, but he could not help it; and now he was told that he was idle, as if it was a thing of choice. He felt the accusation very deeply.

He left Garston's chambers, after merely replying, "I think we had better not discuss things further to-day, you are evidently put out by something, and are not yourself; when we meet

again I trust you will think fit to retract what you have said. Good morning."

And Garston, a little sobered, also said, "good morning."

Such had been their last meeting. Now Seton felt that Garston would do him a hurt if he could, and he remembered that he had seen him with Emma in the park; also he felt sure he must have again seen him with her by the river side. He could not tell what he had absolutely noticed, but he feared he would make the worst of that which he had observed. Seton was feeling very guilty with regard to Gladys; he had heard Garston's laugh, and felt sure that laugh meant mischief.

"I will go and see him, and try if I can't smooth things over," thought our hero. Then it occurred to him that he was very hungry; so he went into that well-known hostelry, the Old Bull, and refreshed himself. Comforted by this repast, he descended the hill, walked down the long road to Holborn, and so to Lincoln's Inn Square.

Garston was at home, and very busy over a new prospectus; this time the company was one formed to work the Great Wheel Mine. From

railroads to mines is but a step, but it is generally a downward one. It would have been evident to Seton, had he known anything of city ways, that Garston was sinking, unless, indeed, he was a promoter, not a dupe.

The two exchanged greetings; then Garston at once, with one of his sneering laughs, began, "You seemed to be having a good time of it yesterday."

"You mean at Richmond?"

"Yes; nice place, Richmond, for that sort of game; devilish fine girl, I must say."

"Look here, Garston, I want to explain to you that that fine girl is a very good girl, and that . . . . . I went to Richmond with her, her mother, and her cousins, yesterday, as any one might do with their friends; they are the people I lodge with, and are perfectly respectable."

"I am sure I have nothing to say against their respectability. I thought I had seen the girl before; it must have been at your lodgings."

"Yes, very likely; they are always uncommonly civil to me, and they asked me to join them yesterday, so I went."

"Of course you went, and you seemed to be enjoying yourself; I swear I quite envied you. We were only a lot of men."

"I spent a pleasant day enough."

"Come Herold, what a close fellow you are. If I hadn't happened to see you kissing her hand and that sort of thing by daylight, and afterwards kissing her face and that sort of thing by moonlight, I should quite have been taken in by your modest assurance; why, d—n it man, she is a conquest to boast of, not to conceal."

Seton coloured, and nearly lost his temper, but was just able to contain himself and say—"What you say you saw is, I own, perfectly correct. I did kiss the girl, and I ought not to have done it. But I give you my honour there was nothing in it; nothing but what you saw has passed between us, and nothing more of that sort will take place; I shall not commit myself in the future as I did yesterday."

"Ha, ha! well preached, Herold; a sinner at night, a saint next morning, ha, ha! If you only knew how often I have done the same sort of thing. But if you are serious and don't want the girl, turn her over to me, there's a good

fellow; I was amazingly taken with her; she is a regular Juno."

"Now, look here, Garston, I came here to-day to explain the equivocal situation in which you saw Miss Filters and myself last night, so that no nonsense should get carried down into Avonshire, and I have said my say on that subject; I object to any more coarse joking about the girl, and I repeat she is a modest girl and a good girl. I am to blame for the incident of last night, which I regret more than I can express; she is as virtuous a girl as any in London, and now let us drop the subject; I trust you will see the propriety of never speaking lightly or imputing anything whatever to Miss Filters."

"Hoighty toighty, Miss Filters! and pray who the devil are you that you should dictate to me what is or what is not propriety? You are a nice sort of fellow to talk of propriety, larking in Richmond Park and kissing girls in public pathways. You, an engaged man, and then come here to me prating of propriety!—by gad, you are a cool hand. I am not to tell, ain't I? that is what has brought you sneaking here, is it?

You and your equivocal situations, and your modest girls; by gad, you ought to have been a parson."

"I am very sorry I did come here to-day, and still more sorry that I ever set eyes on you."

"You shall be more sorry yet; do you think I have forgotten that when quite a cub you did all you could to injure me with your father and your sister? When you thought I could be useful to you, you condescended to take up with me, and benefit by my advice. You d—d young hound do you think I have forgotten all your insolence? Even when you were taking my help you could not keep in your infernal airs of superiority . . . Now take yourself off out of my office, will you, by G—d I have put up with you long enough . . . . now go, will you . . . . d—n you . . . . get out."

Garston was foaming with passion, he was half mad; all the wrongs he had either endured from Seton, or inflicted on him, were now surging in his brain; he had lately made a mess of it in the City, and now that the flood-gates of his temper had given way, he relieved himself of his disgust at his City troubles, and his spite against Seton, in one burst of blasphemous scurrility. Quite

carried away by the passion he was giving vent to, and seeing Seton standing still near the door gazing at him in astonishment, but making no movement to depart, he lashed himself into a still more furious rage, and shouted—

"Won't you get out? . . . then, by G—d I will make you."

With these words he rushed towards Seton, tore open the door with one hand, and made as if he would seize him by the throat with the other. He was bigger and stronger than Seton, and probably had always considered our hero as a lad unable to cope with a man like himself either in physical or mental force; but Seton was not such a feeble antagonist as he imagined, and when his hand touched Seton's arm, that arm at once struck strongly in defence, so strongly and so well that Garston, overbalanced by his attitude, was knocked down and fell with his head against a chest.

The high words and noise brought up a man who lived in the rooms below, who happened to be an acquaintance of Garston. Seton and he lifted the fallen man and set him in a chair; directly he came to, for he had been partially

stunned, he began again to abuse Seton; so, finding his presence only exasperated him, Seton walked out, leaving him in the care of the newcomer.

For the time our hero was quite upset. He had struck no blow in anger since his school days. A nice mess he had made of it; he had gone to Garston's chambers just to explain and smooth things over—a pretty smoothing it had been. What a foul-mouthed brute the fellow was. Now he is sure to do me all the harm he can, thought Seton. He called a cab and went to his club; he did not feel equal to Remington Place yet. The pleasant day under the trees at Richmond had produced results he little anticipated. The smoothing down afterwards had terminated in a hand to hand encounter. Garston had got the worst of it in the present, but Seton feared he would be the greatest sufferer in the long run.

He never thought of the one who was most deeply injured; he never reflected on the misery his misconduct might cause to Emma; he hardly thought of her at all.

CHAPTER IX.

FIRST CATCH YOUR FISH.

WHILE Seton was wandering over Hampstead Heath, Emma and her mother enjoyed a very cheerful breakfast. They talked over all the details of the pic-nic, how funny Jack had been, what a beautiful park it was, how lucky it had been fine. They discussed Mrs. Blesset, her bonnet and her shawl, also her husband and his appetite, and they wondered whether their cousins were tired. Last of all Seton was spoken of, and bit by bit Mrs. Filters extracted from Emma the greater part of what had taken place between her and our hero. They both agreed that things were wholly satisfactory.

"I daresay it won't be long before your gentleman comes tapping at the door."

"Oh, mother, he won't be here yet, surely!" and Emma rustled over to the looking glass.

As she had taken special care in adorning her-

self that morning, she found all was ready for her lover, tap he never so soon.

But no taps came; the morning wore away, and it transpired that Seton had gone out early without breakfasting.

"He never did such a thing before; most likely his thoughts were too many for him, and he could not sleep; a quiet walk and an engaged ring is what he is after," opined Mrs. Filters.

Then they had a good long chat about Emma's future, her mother picturing for her edification the delights of living in the country as a great lady. "Not that I 'old with the country myself, except it is for a day's outing; give me London, its what I've been used to; but lor, there, you can be in the country and London both, whenever you wish it."

"Mr. Herold is not rich though, recollect mother, or he would not be lodging here."

"That is as may be, I know he is a little drawn in just now; but as to lodging here, the house and furniture is fit for any one. John knows things as well as a person can, and he allows that our drawing room is furnished as beautiful as any lord's; from carpet and curtains

to footstools, it's all as good as money can buy."

"I know that, but what I mean is, if he was richer he would be living at home or have a house of his own in London, instead of paying you a pound a week, which is very little for a gentleman."

"Never you mind about that, a little bird has told me he will be as rich as rich before very long, and you won't go empty-handed; I shall see your dear face driving in the park before I am much greyer."

In such like converse the morning passed away; then it became evident that Seton must have had some mission other than the one Mrs. Filters had suggested.

"It must be that law again, I suppose," she said; "if I had my way I'd law them, with their wigs and gowns, like a parcel of old women, talk, talk, talking, and getting paid for it, too; there's nothing but trouble ever comes of law. Now mind me, Emma, the very first bit of pleasure he offers you, just say out bold it isn't jewels, or theatres, or carriages you care about, but it is 'appiness; and there can be no real 'appiness where law is, it is

like all one constant nag, as if there was a bad tooth always at you. Just tell him that, and say if he wishes to please you he can't do it better than by giving up his lawing; what does he know about law, he is too much of a gentleman; he says that Mr. Garston helped him on with it; well—just you help him off."

"But perhaps he will lose all his money if he doesn't go on?"

"No he won't, don't you think it; he is bringing the law against the other, not the other against him; he can drop it if he thinks well to."

"But if the other has taken what belongs to him, won't the law give it him back?"

"Lor, my dear, the law never gives anything, it just takes and takes, and lets you have 'opes which are about as dear things to buy as any in the market."

"Perhaps he won't like my meddling in such matters though, mother."

"Don't start with that Emma; your poor father and I never did, and we always lived comfortable; he often and often said to me, 'Caroline, give me a woman's head for money,

and a man's arm for work, that is the text for my slab.' Just you begin giving your advice from the first start, and it will go smooth enough, 'abit is everything. Not, mind you, that you are to go pushing in at wrong times; take him when he is comfortable, not when he is put out, get round him, don't go against him, let him think he is having it all as he likes, never contradict him, but just as quiet as quiet stick to the thing you are driving at, always as sweet as a kernel, but as firm as a shell—lor,' no man can beat a woman that sticks to it; they bluster and strut like farmyard cocks, but if you handle them firm, they soon get quiet enough."

"I am sure Mr. Herold doesn't bluster and strut, mother."

"No, it isn't likely, they all have their ways; some are quiet, and some bluster, but it all comes to the same; I ain't speaking of your gentleman in particular, but recollect these two things, be sweet and firm together, and an ounce of flattery goes further than a pound of argument; if you stick to these, you will be a 'appy woman, my dear."

Mrs. Filters may or may not have been correct

in her opinion of men; the advice may have been sound or otherwise; but it certainly was premature, and by night time she and her daughter both began to feel very uncomfortable at Seton's non-appearance. It was unnatural; a lover the day after his proposal—for such they esteemed his last night's conduct—not to appear, to absent himself from the house altogether; to go out before breakfast and not to be back at eleven o'clock at night; no word left, no message sent.

"You don't think he has met with any accident, do you mother?" was asked by trembling lips belonging to an anxious face, now very different from the glad one of the morning.

For another hour they discussed every form and variety of street accident they had ever heard of; at last, having exhausted every calamity of that nature, Emma went to bed, but Mrs. Filters sat on to let the truant in, however late he might return—so immaculate a lodger was Seton that he had never even hinted at a latch key.

It was nearly one when he arrived, and was received with smiles by Mrs. Filters.

"I am sure I am very sorry to have kept you up, Mrs. Filters."

"Never mind me, Mr. Herold, I am only too glad to see you safe. Me and Emma were wondering where you could have got to, and have been frightening ourselves with all manner of things. Come in and have something, do. Emma is gone up to bed; if you'll excuse me one minute, I will just step up and tell her you are safe."

Before Seton could say a word, she was off upstairs, leaving him in the passage with the parlour door open before him. He was bound by politeness to wait her return, so he entered the parlour and sat down, he was very tired; had dined at his club, looked on at men playing whist, had himself played billiards, and he was longing to get to bed. "Confound old Filly," he thought, "what makes her bother so? I wish she had left a bed candle" . . . . . then he laughed at his newly-invented nickname for his landlady, and the thought of her disgust if she only knew of it . . . . . he had taken brandy and soda more than once, and was just a little . . . . silly.

While still smiling at his own conceit, old Filly came back very smiling also.

"She is quite comfortable now, and which will you take, there is white wine and red. My poor dear 'usband always took something hot the last thing, just to sleep on, and it's a thing I do believe is quite 'armless; a little wine for your stomach's sake, I 'old with, too much is quite the other way. Now, which shall it be?"

"Thank you, I don't want anything, really."

"You had better have something, do now?"

"Well, a little sherry and water then, please."

"That's right, it is dry work talking."

Having no intention of talking, Seton merely sipped his wine and water, and wondered what made old Filly so out of the way civil; she must have been following her husband's example, he thought.

This was not so; but now she took a good large glass of port, saying, she found it warmer to her than white wine. Then, these two sat sipping and staring at the cut paper in the grate. She was waiting for Seton to speak,

believing he had much to tell her. He had nothing to say.

"Why doesn't he begin, I wonder; if he has engaged himself to Emma, surely he intends to tell me of it," thought Mrs. Filters.

"What a bore old Filly is," thought Seton.

At last he gulped down the rest of his sherry and water, and got up with an unrepressed yawn—

"You really must excuse me, Mrs. Filters, I am so tired."

Looking at him, she saw that he did look very weary, so she made no further effort to detain him, but produced the wished for flat candlestick, and allowed him to depart, only remarking—

"I hope nothing is wrong with the lawyers, Mr. Herold?"

"Oh, no, thank you."

"I was afraid something had happened, you look so out of sorts."

"I had some troublesome matters to see to to-day, and I am tired out, that is all."

"A good sleep will put you all to rights, and to-morrow you can tell me all about it; there, good night."

Mrs. Filters was longing to take him to her maternal bosom, she could hardly keep from hugging him—if he had only spoken one word, she certainly would have done so; as it was she smiled on him so tenderly at parting, that Seton, as he took off his coat, and then began removing his boots, thought, "Old Filly is getting quite sweet on me," and the miscreant chuckled at the notion of mother and daughter both being spooney on him!

Just then it flashed across him that Emma must have been telling her mother of his last night's conduct, and they already were looking on him as one secured; "that is what she meant by telling her all about it in the morning, that was why she had gone up to tell Emma of his arrival, and the meaning of the port and sherry." What in the world should he do?

For several minutes he sat on the side of the bed with one boot still on, and swinging the other in his hand, as he considered his position. He could see no road open by which he could retreat with any comfort from his awkward situation, so at last he took off the other boot, undressed, and went to bed, all jocular feeling

having quite died out; it was not now a question of old Filly, but how to meet Mrs. Filters and her daughter on the morrow.

For one day our hero had eluded his would-be mother-in-law, but knowing her opinion as to pertinacity, it is quite clear that he will sooner or later have to render an account of his intentions.

* * * * * *

Seton gained a little delay by rising late next morning, dressing very slowly, dawdling over his neck ties, and arranging his drawers; but at last he had to leave his bedroom and go into the sitting room. There he felt he was at the mercy of the enemy.

No hostile demonstration was however made; breakfast came and went, the newspaper arrived and was brought up. He read it very carefully, but his thoughts were wandering all the time—each moment he expected an interruption. About noon he took hat and stick and thought he would get out, so repeating the Fabian tactics of yesterday.

At the bottom of the stairs he met Emma, and

they shook hands. Of course he shook her hand, but he felt very differently towards the hand to the way he had done to its fellow in the carriage.

"Why, you are never going out without an umbrella surely? it is raining fast."

And so it was. Seton had not noticed it, but there were the large drops coming down faster and faster.

Mrs. Filters came from the open parlour door, and said—

"Come in, Mr. Herold; there is no one but me and Emma. Lor' you can't go out in this rain, and what need have you, it is much nicer in; take his hat and stick Emma—there, sit down; how lucky we didn't have this storm at Richmond, wasn't it? Lawks me, if I haven't forgotten to tell Sarah about those sheets"—and off went Mrs. Filters, after fairly talking Seton right into the room and down into a chair.

That admirable tactician had refrained from encountering the enemy in his entrenchments, she had waited till he made a sally—in his camp she could not have brought her great gun into action. The heavens were propitious, the rain as it were beat in the face of the foe, and there

he now was in the parlour right in front of the great gun.

As he was a young man of sufficient animal pluck, it is probable he would have much preferred being in the vicinity of a real cannon's mouth to his present proximity to those rosy lips that now were about to fire on him. The action commenced thus—

"How very wet it has come on."

"Yes, very."

"Quite all of a sudden."

"Yes, I had no idea it was going to rain."

Then there was a pause, when the firing was resumed by Emma saying—

"How lucky it didn't rain the day of our picnic, wasn't it?"

"Very lucky, it isn't often it is fine at picnics."

"No, so they say. Have you been at many? I think they are so nice."

"Not many; what a nice place Richmond is."

"So pretty; and the river and all, I enjoyed it all so much—and the drive home." Here Emma felt that she was blushing; she had meant to encourage Seton to speak out, thinking he was

shy and longing to get over this preliminary formal part of the affair so that the pleasanter after part might commence; now the recollection of that drive home, with hands interlocked, made her blush, fearing her praise of it was too forward—there she sat with glowing cheeks and melting eyes ready for the words and kisses, but feeling she had said enough; it was his turn now.

Seton would willingly have let the whole affair alone. He had squeezed her hand and kissed her, and the less now said the better; the affair was over, and talking could do no good—it was not possible that anything could come of it. He was not in love with Emma, and why should she be so with him? Of course it was nonsense, the mistake would rectify itself; the affair was a nuisance. Already a row with Garston had ensued, now he had an awkward explanation to make. He wished it was over—he saw he must do it—the misunderstanding must not go on—it must be stopped; the affair refused to slip by.

Looking up he found Emma was gazing earnestly at him; she was yearning for an explanation of a very different sort to the one he

had to offer; why did he not begin?—why not say the one word she so longed to hear?

Alas! such word never would be uttered; if he had but murmured Emma, she would have flown to him, and nestled on his heart. Instead of this from his lips fell—

"Miss Filters, I fear I have acted very badly to you, I ought never to have done it!"

She stared at him speechlessly.

"I ought to have known better," he continued, "but somehow I couldn't help it, you looked so beautiful."

Here was refreshing manna! How odd he was to be so stiff about it. And Miss Filters, too! but perhaps that was the right way in high society. The pang passed away, the radiance returned to her face. It was her turn to say something, so with her sweetest smile and a fresh blush, she very softly said—

"I was not angry."

"Oh, I am very glad of that, I was afraid you might have been, for I know I had no right; thank you for forgiving me, I promise never to do such a thing again; you are sure you have quite forgiven me?"

Emma very faintly said—

"I forgive you."

Seton, feeling quite cheerful at getting over the thing so easily, went on gaily—

"There is an end of it then; what a foolish, naughty fellow I was; shake hands Miss Filters, just to show me it is all ended satisfactorily"—and he put out his hand to her, that very hand which had lain with hers cuddled up in the shawl during nearly the whole drive home.

This was too much. Emma was not naturally so very meek; love had softened her, and she had felt like very wax, ready to be moulded as her lover chose; but now this seeming outrage roused her, and she jumped up with flashing eyes and scornful mouth.

"No, Mr. Herold! I will not shake hands, there has been fooling enough between us already. When I said I forgave you, I did not know what you were alluding to, I did not conceive you meant"— . . . . Here utterance failed her. After a moment she resumed—"Is that the way gentlemen in your rank go about behaving? . . did you really think I was to be picked up and flung aside like a . . . like this? . . . I

little thought that you"— . . . Finding herself unable to continue, she moved towards the door, and Seton, who had risen, hastened to open it—he had no words to offer.

With one look of disdain, Emma passed out. Her mother met her on the landing, the look of disdain had passed away, and was succeeded by one of despairing anguish; she did not speak, but pushing past, gained her own room, double locked the door, and abandoned herself to her misery.

Mrs. Filters hastened to the parlour to find out what had caused this sudden change in Emma, but Seton was gone—she found only an empty room.

CHAPTER X.

PUNISHMENT AND PARDON.

HUMAN nature could not stand this suspense. Emma gone to her room without a word, and Seton gone out of the house and up the street like a postman!

What in the world was it all about? Had they got quarrelling, or whatever was it? So Mrs. Filters knocked at her daughter's door.

"You can't come in."

"Lor', my dear, it's me."

"You can't come in."

"Lor', Emma, don't say such a thing; open the door do; whatever has happened?"

It was long before the door was opened, but at last Emma gave way and admitted her mother then she indulged in a fresh burst of tears.

Mrs. Filters let her cry without a word for some time; at last she ceased, and her mother saw her face. Poor girl, her eyes were soddened, her cheeks more like kneaded dough than the

bright flesh and blood that usually appeared to such advantage, set off by her dark hair; the hair itself had come down and hung dank on her crumpled collar and crushed pink ribbons.

"Now tell your mother all about it, my lamb?"

"There isn't anything to tell, mother."

"What did he say?—he must have said something."

"He didn't say . . . anything."

"Come, tell me, there's a dear; what is it he has done to make you like this?" Here Mrs. Filters cried in sympathy with her daughter's distress.

After a while Emma managed to say—

"He said . . . he . . . had acted badly . . . and . . . and . . . that he couldn't help it. . . . And then he asked me to forgive him . . . that was all."

"You don't mean that was all he said, there must be more behind; didn't he offer you his 'and?"

"He offered me . . . his hand . . . just to say it was all foo . . . foo . . . foolishness, and there was an end of it all."

"An end of it all?"

"Yes, mother."

"Are you sure what you tell me is what did 'appen?"

"Yes, mother; you don't think I'd invent such a thing, surely?"

"No, my dear, not for an instant—only just to make sure. If Mr. Herold thinks to get off like this he is mistaken, I will let him know; but lor' it must be a mistake; I will speak to him, Emma, and put it all to rights."

"Mother," said Emma—and she stood before her with her wan face and black eyes now shining fiercely—"Mother, promise me that no word shall ever pass your lips to him about me."

"Why not, my dear? I must speak for you, it must be a mistake."

"There is no mistake, mother, he doesn't care for me any more than that chair does."

"Then what did he go making up to you like that for?"

"I don't know, he says it was foolishness, and done on the moment."

"I will moment him; wait till I get him . . . . . "

"Now, mother, I won't have it, I could see he didn't care for me. I have done badly enough for myself as it is, and I won't have anything more said about it. I ain't going to be made a laughing stock. You promise me never to speak about this . . . . . this foolishness again."

"I know best, my dear, how to manage them, lor', you ain't used to men."

"I tell you, mother, once for all, I won't have it; if you ever say a word to him or any one about this, I will go away. I am young and strong, and I could work, and I won't stay here to be talked about."

Very reluctantly Mrs. Filters gave way and promised not to speak to Seton. It was settled he must no longer remain their lodger, so the following note was written, and placed on the table in the drawing room:—

"Mrs. Filters' compliments to Mr. Herold and she will feel obliged if he will suit himself to other lodgings as conveniently as he can.

"CAROLINE FILTERS."

This concise and dignified epistle, over which,

short as it was, Mrs. Filters had taken much time, as she wished to make it perfect, was read by Seton before he went to bed that night.

He had come in about ten, and was very glad to find his candle all ready for him in the passage. The parlour door was shut—no invitation to wine to-night. All was very silent. He went upstairs and on the table was the note.

On the whole this note was a relief; Seton had felt that the sooner he quitted Remington Place the better, it could no longer be as a home to him and he had been puzzled how to effect his retreat; now the thing was done for him, and he determined to get out of the house without any loss of time; his situation there was most irksome. So next morning he went off in search of fresh lodgings and took the first he came across that would suit his purse. The rooms he hired were in a street close by, and before noon he had installed himself in them, after paying his bill through the medium of Sarah, the servant.

No. 7, Winchcom Street was a great come down from 8, Remington Place; his rooms were on the ground floor and looked very mean and

drabby; the kiss and hand-squeeze had resulted in much discomfort; instead of Mrs. Filters' drawing room floor he now was tenant of a dining room in Winchcom Street; instead of Mrs. Filters' two smart servants he had now only a small share in one grubby maid of all work, who said her name was Hann. Emma was suffering in mind—our hero paid in bodily discomfort.

Mrs. Filters was fairly upset; such a nice young fellow, so clean and quiet, so well behaved except in this last matter. She examined every article of furniture in the deserted drawing room, there was not a tear or a scratch that could possibly be attributed to him; he had never so much as cracked a tea-cup; what a husband he would have made.

"Dear-a-me, who would have thought it? there we had just got all as comfortable as could be and phoo . . . . . away it all goes like a genii in a pantomime."

Lingering in the bosom of Mrs. Filters there was a hope that after all it must be some nonsense between Emma and our hero. When he finds himself all alone in Winchcom Street he'll come round. With this thought she became

more resigned to the absence of her late lodger, believing that in the end things might yet be right. She had not been above finding out from the cabman who conveyed Seton's effects where Seton was going, and angry as she was, she almost felt sorry that he should be in Winchcom Street; it was not a good street, and Mrs. Filters, relenting towards him, hoped the beds were clean.

The evening post brought the following letter from Seton:—

"My Dear Mrs. Filters,

"I cannot part from you without thanking you for all your kindness to me while I was in your house. That such untoward circumstances arose will always be a subject of the deepest regret to me; I trust you will accept my most heartfelt apologies for anything I have done to offend you or Miss Filters. I shall always hold you both in the highest esteem, and I trust that in the future I shall be able to regain your friendship. I am much punished for my momentary failure in respect to Miss Filters, and I own I was entirely in the wrong, and was much to blame in the matter. It is very grievous

to me to be driven from what I had learnt to look upon as a second home, but I have deserved to suffer. Some day I hope to be forgiven.

"Believe me to remain,

"Ever very truly yours,

"SETON HEROLD."

* * * * * *

This letter had been by no means easy to concoct, but a more serious difficulty remained. Seton had managed to satisfy himself tolerably well in the letter to Mrs. Filters, but no words he could set on paper for the purpose of excusing his indiscretion to Gladys at all pleased him. Something he must do and that at once, for Garston was certain to make what mischief he could in the matter; besides which he longed to make a clean breast of it to Gladys—but no written words seemed suitable. How could he set on paper that he had wandered by moonlight with a beautiful girl, had kissed her so openly that passers by had seen it? How could he make visible by black marks on white paper that he had squeezed this same girl's hand beneath her shawl, and yet set down that these

things had no meaning, were harmless, just the results of impulse?

The more he thought it over, the worse his conduct appeared, and the more difficult the task of writing explanations seemed. He tried sheet after sheet of paper, but as fast as he wrote on them, he tore them up, until at last he got so dazed that he really felt as if he must have passed years of life in kissing Emma, in squeezing her hand, and now his punishment was to confess these faults eternally.

He looked up from his task, and took stock of his new surroundings; before him was a gaunt bookcase, surmounted by a battered tea-caddy, and a rickety cruet stand; on its shelves were some sets of sermons, and three porcelain sheep; there were dingy curtains, and a drabby carpet more porcelain animals and a match holder were on the chimney piece, and that was about all, except hard chairs, a table, and a still harder sofa.

He added to the blots on the table cover, and he bit his penholder, but his brains grew dull as his surroundings. He ended by banging the innocent paper case, and going off to bed;

he had entirely failed in finding words in which to record his transgression truly, and yet give force to the fact that he was not a lawless plunderer of sweets that should have been uncoveted by him—this thing had been far too difficult for him. He could not write, would it not be better to go down and speak the necessary words? Yes, that would be the best; and before Seton fell asleep he determined to go down to the "Quarries" and make a clean breast of it in such words as he might find most suitable when the moment came.

* * * * * *

"Oh, my darling, how glad I am; I almost thought I was never going to see you again. Aunt Mary come, Seton is here."

Kissing him and petting him almost frantically, Gladys sparkled out her fountain of questions; she had been crossing the hall when the front door opened, and in came . . . . her life, her heart's core . . . . . in came Seton.

"How did you come? did you walk from Chippington? why didn't you write? how dusty you are, ain't you tired? Oh, Seton, I am so glad"

. . . . . and then she let him go, danced back a step or two, regarded him critically, then said, "I think you are grown;" after that she called on Aunt Mary afresh.

Aunt Mary came out and saluted Seton, and they all went into the library. The parrots were much pleased at the unwonted confusion, but did not say anything, they seemed intent on listening to the conversation, and covertly sneering at its vapidness.

"Do you think him grown, aunt? his hair is a great deal too long; how burnt you are. Aunt says I am, but you can't go shaded always, can you?"

"My dear Gladys, don't run on so, Seton will think you are losing your senses; you are getting too old to be such a chatterbox."

"Oh, please don't scold me to-day, aunt. Any other day, I am too happy to be scolded to-day. I will be so good, I won't speak but just a little. I will be ever so naughty to-morrow and take my scolding quite meekly. But do you think Seton is grown?"

"I don't see that he is, my dear; he will never be as tall as Guss, or as broad."

"No, that I shan't, he is a splendid fellow," said Seton, heartily.

Then the conversation drifted into all sorts of channels. Guss was well and flourishing, he had not written much; when last heard of he was at Lisbon, and was going to the Cape. Old Weston's leg was better, but Mrs. Gillie's rheumatics were much the same. Job had got married, "but that I told you in my last letter," said Gladys; "the latest and most important news of all is, I have got a new hat. Aunt Mary brought it back from Avonside as a surprise."

Here Aunt Mary submitted to being kissed to a faint chorus of—

"Kiss a pretty Gladys, poor Chucky wants a nut, quite right, mum, kiss, kiss, kiss."

"I am sure you are dying to see my new hat, Seton, I won't be long." And away danced Gladys.

On her return the hat was pronounced to be a great success. "It will shade her face," said her aunt.

The outdoor effect was very good, its great width of flap threw the whole face into a half light that made her loveliness still more ethereal.

"Dear Seton, I am so happy," said the maiden as she sat down on the seat beneath the lime tree. Then our hero began.

"My love, my darling, I have come down here to make a confession."

"Wait a minute till I become dignified;" then drawing her exquisite figure to its full height, Gladys folded her arms and said—"now you may proceed with your disclosure, I will weigh the matter well."

With such words as he best could muster Seton told his tale straightforwardly from first to last. As he went on Gladys relaxed her attitude, her playfulness changed to thoughtfulness, her great blue eyes looked very serious.

Seton ended his confession, and his judge said —"I don't understand much about it, kneel down before me."

Then, when he had knelt, she took off and cast aside his hat, put one hand on each of his cheeks, thus holding his head firmly, and said— "Now look up full at me." Seton turned his face to hers and looked at her unflinchingly. Gladys read his eyes with hers deeply and searchingly; then she stooped and kissed his forehead,

and said very gently—"My love, you are forgiven, I see you did not mean to vex me or to do harm. I don't understand how men do go on, but you will never do it again dear, will you?"

Seton felt very solemn, and answered simply, "I never will."

Then his crime was condoned; all that Gladys said about it afterwards was, "I am so sorry for—what was her name?—Emma, poor thing."

* * * * * *

Once again they had a very pleasant time together, they wandered about the old haunts; once more they rowed upon the river, once more were merry in the lime tree walk. The house at Westerham was empty and deserted; all the better were they able to play at furnishing and redecorating it in anticipation of the day when once again it would be Seton's home and therefore her home also.

Seton rode over to Wrencourt and was received with a moderate show of warmth, but Elinor did not seem overjoyed at seeing him, and Wren took him to task about the law suit. They invited him to stop there awhile, but he felt it was all very

chilly, and he was glad to get back and have one more day with Gladys.

Mrs. Tarleton was kind to him, as indeed she was to every living creature, but even she was not as she had once been; she could not altogether forgive him for deranging her plans concerning Gladys.

On this last day a letter forwarded from his lodgings reached Seton. It was from Mr. Gosling, and to the effect that a legal formality had to be at once gone through; the defendants in Herold *versus* Fermor had applied that security to the amount of one hundred pounds should be given by plaintiff. Mr. Gosling explained that this was a thing they had a right to insist on, and it was a mere matter of form; would he kindly furnish the name of such security.

Security for a hundred pounds did not sound much, but who should he ask? First he thought of Mrs. Tarleton, but it occurred to him that it might bother her to be spoken to about legal matters, all his relations having expressed such horror of the law in any shape the idea of this security might frighten her.

The next person that presented himself was

Wren—he would at once see that the liability began and ended with the one hundred pounds.

So he again rode over to Wrencourt and almost jokingly broached the subject, but he soon saw that Wren by no means regarded it as a joke.

"All my life," he said, "I have refused to go security for any one; this I have made an absolute rule. If by the gift of one hundred pounds I could do you any good I would manage it immediately, but really to be a security is a thing I cannot consent to."

"I am sure I had no idea that going security for this hundred pounds was such a formidable affair, or I wouldn't have troubled you."

"It is not the amount, it is the principle involved, besides it mixes me up in the law suit to a certain extent."

"I can't see how it does that, but of course if you object, there is an end to it; I thought as we are closely connected I could ask a favour of you better than from another person. Let us drop the subject; how are your young pheasants getting on?"

"I wish to say one other word, Seton, I am willing to let you have one hundred pounds, and

with that you can indemnify some one who will go security for you; on those terms you can easily find a person."

"If it can be done in that way I need not have troubled you at all, for I can manage to indemnify, I daresay, though ready money is scarce with me at present. Many thanks for the hint. And now I will gallop off back, it is my last day down here probably for some time."

Riding back to the "Quarries," Seton reflected on what had passed between Wren and himself, and he came to the conclusion that, except Gladys, he had no real friend; there was Ralph Lacy, but he was far away, and Guss might be an exception, but only partially so now he feared. "Perhaps," he thought, "when I am back again at Westerham and able to keep up my proper place in the county I shall have plenty of friends; I suppose its the way of the world. I have to fight my battle, and when I have won there will be plenty to back me up. Never mind, thank God I have Gladys, and I may yet live to make some of them ashamed of their faint-heartedness."

A turn in the road brought Westerham in sight, with its colonnade and lawns, its flanking

woods, and fair meadows; he could see the shining river, and the waving cornfields. Then his heart grew strong within him; "It is a fair heritage," he thought, "how good it all is; how happy Gladys and I will be when we are able to go there and live."

There was the home farm with its great ricks of hay, he almost fancied he could smell those of the present year; there were the sheep and cattle calmly grazing; as when such sheep and cattle had been the property of his father, who had loved to walk among them. Tears came to his eyes, as he thought of that father he had loved so well.

"Poor father," he murmured, "he did what he thought best for me, but I wish he had given me a profession."

Seton turned his horse's head away, and soon Westerham was hidden by the rising ground. Next day he was back in Winchcom Street.

CHAPTER XI.

A LITTLE GREASE.

MR. GOSLING was able to make necessary arrangements respecting the security for the hundred pounds, and the law suit languished on till the Long Vacation. Then all was at a standstill, and Seton's life grew very dreary. He found his early manhood slipping away from him without his being able to effect anything; he had hoped to lead an active useful life, improving the condition of those around him; he had before his father's death formed many plans for ameliorating the condition of the poor. Probably he would have found these were but visions quickly melted into air; most likely his crude ideas would not have stood the test of practice, even where the notions were well conceived and sound, of a surety they would have been combatted by that worst of all opposition, inertness. He knew nothing of the difficulties that beset the path

of reformers, especially in agricultural districts. He did not guess that his brother squires would sneer at him and laugh at his efforts. He could form no idea of the way in which the farmers would discuss him and his projects at the market ordinaries. He was unaware that the very men he wished to benefit, even the labourers themselves, would distrust him, and ridicule him. The preaching of new things is a toil little requited, the practice of new things so preached is an effort very seldom attempted. Labourers would willingly pocket an extra half crown of wages, would grin and thank you to your face, but they would think of you as a fool, and speak of you as such behind your back. They would consider the half-crown a gift, the motive of which was an enigma, they would not comprehend that it was a conscientious equivalent for their labour heretofore underpaid. They would not be inclined to earn the larger wage by better work, the extra pay would rather have a tendency to make them skulk. "What a vool he wur wurdn't he, danged if I doant zee what a ool stand," would be about the sentiment they would express and act on.

Such would have been the difficulties of a reformer in the days when Seton was a young man; now, all things bucolic are altering or altered; still even now farmers, labourers and squires do not pull together like one happy family where all is mutual trust and confidence. It is supposed that the new Agricultural Bill and the Board Schools have in a manner asphalted all the paths of agricultural life; but Seton knew nothing of such things looming in the future. At the period when he was mourning his inactivity no such movement had taken place, and the great difficulty was to make any change at all; a good sound Toryism prevailed, a *régime* that said to the earth tillers stand still, as Joshua did to the sun and moon. It was open to reformers to give the extra half-crown, and thereby secure the hatred and malice of some among their neighbours and the derision of the rest. It was possible to clean and restore cottages, to lay out gardens, and let out allotments. But it was not possible to get the inhabitants of the renovated tenements to perform their part in the contract. Even now the same difficulties too often arise, except in places where the people

can be bribed or coerced into cleanly and orderly habits. Withdraw the pressure and withhold the bribe, back come the weeds and dirt, the tidiness and cleanliness depart, and once more the people are free and happy in their grime. Pigsties and dung-heaps have as great a fascination for some minds as tumble-down castles and highland storms for others; and with reason, for are not the former prime elements of wealth.

Pondering much on these matters, and debarred from attempting to use his broom to cleanse the labourers' surroundings, unable to attempt any amelioration of their lot, and knowing nothing of the failures he would necessarily sustain in such tasks, Seton pined through all the Long Vacation. He tried to improve his mind by a course of reading, he thought he would study the theories of agriculture if he could not pursue its practices; and for lighter reading he took up the history of all nations. Always fond of books and with an omnivorous appetite, he set greedily to work on those two branches of literature, and he read so diligently that he grew quite thin and pale over his studies. To do away with the ill-effects of these continuous sittings,

and glad to escape from Winchcom Street, he took such long and fatiguing walks over his favourite Hampstead Heath that he frequently returned home quite exhausted. He was delicate, and just now he was under nourished; accustomed all his life to eat and drink after the profuse manner of his class, now that he was driven to economise, and knowing of no method of economy save to eat and drink less, he economised too far in that direction. He knew nothing of cheaper foods, or how to get them; chops and fowls, steaks and small joints were his idea of dinners, so he took one chop where he should have eaten two, and husbanded his joints as much as his landlady would allow him.

At last London became itself again, the law courts re-opened, and Gosling bestirred himself afresh. Notes from him requesting information on points connected with the suit frequently reached Seton in the evening, and gave him sleepless nights.

He was very seldom able to throw any light upon the subject in question, and probably the thing did not really signify one straw; most likely these communications were only intended

to swell the lawyer's bill, but not the less they disquieted him.

One evening a note of more than usual importance and discomfort arrived; in it Mr. Gosling preferred a request for a little money on account; would Mr. Herold look in and arrange this? He would be at home at eleven.

This gave Seton a very bad night indeed. On calling in Kent Street next morning he found Gosling as cheerful and smooth as ever.

"My dear sir, very sorry to have troubled you to come here on this subject, but you know we must lime our twig to catch our bird."

"Confound his metaphors," thought Seton; then aloud—

"I suppose liming our twig means the money you wrote about last night; how much do you require?"

"I require none, not a penny, my dear sir; it is the suit that wants a little feeding."

"I thought you told me there would be nothing to pay, at least that Mr. Fermor would have to pay it, or else the estate?"

"My dear sir, your memory is perfectly accurate, and I stick to my former statement."

"Then why do you ask me for money now?"

"Why, my dear sir, does the fowler spend money on his net, or the gamekeeper on a trap to catch his prey? my dear sir, eventually the prey pays for his own trap or net."

"Then you mean I must advance money for the suit?"

"Some one must till costs are given you, and they are sure to follow the verdict which we reckon on; some one must stand the expense, and surely that some one can be none other than yourself."

"How much is wanted?"

"About one hundred and fifty will carry us on."

"What is it wanted for?"

"Why you see, my dear sir, the law of England is like a lumbering old coach, very strong and very solid; it does not travel very rapidly; it is slow but sure, its springs are tough and sound, only they require a little oil occasionally—just a little grease to keep them moving."

"And the hundred and fifty is?—"

"Quite so, my dear sir—the amount of grease required."

"I did not expect this, and I am not prepared with the money; I have no spare money."

"No one ever has, my dear sir; I did not for a moment imagine you had, but you can borrow it, no doubt."

"Indeed, I do not know where to borrow that or any other sum."

"There can be no difficulty, my dear sir, your bankers will surely accommodate you?"

The interview ended by Seton going off to his bankers and asking to speak with one of the partners. He was again shown into the little room with the skylight, but he saw there was a change in the manner of the partner who listened to his tale.

"Give me Mr. Seton Herold's account," was the order given to a clerk, and a ledger was brought in. After a few hums and ha's and some minutes passed with a pencil, the partner said, "I see your total debit is £2,307 11s. 3d."

"So much as that?"

"Yes, there was an item of interest not charged when we last looked into your affairs; would you like to look over the figures?"

Seton waived that formality, as he knew the

accounts were as Sanscrit to him. Then the partner resumed—

"I think you mentioned one hundred and fifty pounds as the sum you wish us to advance you now?"

"If you have no objection."

"Excuse me half a minute;" and the partner went out.

A dreary five minutes elapsed, then he returned and said—"We will have a short security drawn out, and if you will look in to-morrow you can have the money."

With a mind infinitely relieved, Seton thanked him and departed.

The next day he signed the deed and received the money, which he transferred at once to Mr. Gosling, who remarked—"Not much difficulty you see, my dear sir, now we can slide on again." With these words he placed the roll of ten pound notes in his pocket-book, and slid that into his pocket.

"When will the suit come on? I fear Mr. Fermor does not intend to surrender."

"It is impossible to say what course he will take; with a man like Fermor it is impossible to

predicate exactly . . . He is a wonderful man, but for a little slip or two he might have been quite at the top of the tree . . . Even now . . . well, well . . . we shall see; a very clever man."

"But about the suit, will it come on soon?"

"It is all in good train, my dear sir, all in good train; but you can't expect the Master of the Rolls to run, you know." Tickled at the idea, Gosling patted his palms together as in applause of his own wit.

Seton feeling buoyant at having got over his money crisis, feebly capped Gosling's joke—"We don't want the Master of the Rolls to run, but to sit in this case."

"Very good, indeed, my dear sir, very good indeed."

Then as if a repetition of such excellent things would be too much for him, he bid Seton a very cordial good morning.

Having shaken the smooth, pudgy hand, our hero departed, leaving Gosling wondering that any man could be such an idiot. "What to goodness he expects to get out of the suit is what puzzles me; even if we win he will only get his

own money which Fermor will let him have in the long run in any case, if it can be got out of the estate. And if we lose . . . well, well; it is as good a way of sowing wild oats as any other—legal wild oats! quite a new grain! I hope the seed can be educated and got to yield a constantly increasing harvest for my brethren and myself; or suppose I leave out my brethren, well, well."

The result of greasing the wheels of the law seemed to be that the other side became more active; to Seton's horror and disgust, what are termed "Interrogatories" were one day sent to him by the evening post; he hated this evening post, and could not help anathematising the cheerful young postman who left lawyers' letters with the same merry manner he distributed money remittances or love letters. From his ground floor sitting room Seton could hear Hann and the postman making love; in spite of Hann's dinginess she was a good-looking girl, and a very sharp one, full of fun, and evidently much admired by this young letter carrier, who dallied at 7, Winchcom Street much longer than the

authorities would have permitted had they known of it.

"Have done, do, I'll tell my mother," then a titter and noise as of a slight struggle taking place, followed the rat-tat which always seemed to go through Seton's brain. Then Hann entered the room with the bulky packet of Interrogatories held in one hand and protected from it by the corner of her apron; the other hand, after quitting the door handle, stole softly to her back hair, and there arranged the knob that adorned her cranium, which had got pushed to one side in her encounter with the amorous postman. Having arranged her hair, Hann presented the heavy packet, and remarked that the postman must be "wored to death with carrying such-like 'eavy harticles." Seton was quite disinclined to take any hint of the sort, he would rather have paid the young man to stop away. Hann lingered a moment, thinking that, perhaps, when he felt the weight he would relent and give her a shilling for her admirer, but as Seton took no further notice of her, she wiped her hands in her apron and departed.

It was indeed a weighty packet; enclosed was a note from Gosling:—

"*Herold v. Fermor.*

"My dear Sir,—

"I herewith forward you copy of Interrogatories that have been served on us in this case; you will see that most of the questions refer to things of which you probably possess no knowledge. It will be necessary to be very exact in your answers, and it will be advisable to confine those answers to as few words as possible. If you need any advice as to the form in which your answers should be given, I shall be at liberty to-morrow from three to four.

"Believe me, my dear Sir,

"Very faithfully yours,

"R. Gosling.

"To Seton Herold, Esq."

On examination of these Interrogatories, it became evident to Seton that Mr Gosling had been perfectly correct in saying that most of the questions referred to things outside his knowledge; indeed, they principally referred to matters

that had taken place prior to his birth. He did not see much difficulty in answering any of the questions after a certain fashion, the bulk of his answers being, "I know nothing about this," "I am unable to give any answer to this question;" "I was not born, and therefore cannot tell." He puzzled his brains, thinking why on earth they asked him such questions, but he worked away, and did not leave off his writing till some hours past midnight.

After such rest as he could obtain from some five hours of nightmare, in which all sorts of questions were propounded by endless rows of wigged heads all bobbing at him, and all, as they surged up and down, bullying him with their—"If not, why not, and how otherwise," Seton went at it again.

He was so diligent and persevering, that shortly after three he arrived in a cab at Mr. Gosling's office, carrying with him the Interrogatories answered.

Gosling, secretly amused at his diligence, was outwardly very complimentary.

"Re-markable, my dear sir, re-markable; you should have been one of us—eh?—my dear

sir; if you were not Alexander you would have made an excellent—lawyer—eh?—ha! ha!"

"I think Diogenes represents law in the abstract better than lawyers, or perhaps his tub does so even better than himself as I presume his tub was not easily moved, it must have been a very stationary tub or he could have moved it instead of asking the king to get out of the way and so accepting a favour."

"Very good, indeed, my dear sir, ve-ry good; law is like a stationary tub—eh?—ha! ha! very good, ve-ry good indeed."

"It certainly seems true of Chancery; when will these preliminaries come to an end, and the case go before the Court?"

"Impossible to say, my dear sir; the tub can't be rolled very quick; ha! ha!—a stationary tub, as you say; and one not easy to get to the bottom of, contents not to be stirred incautiously, eh? ha! ha! very good, ve-ry good, cap-i-tal." And Gosling rubbed away at his palms as though an assistant of some patent palm-made pill manufacturer.

Seton duly laughed, but he stuck to the point, and repeated his question.

"You see, my dear sir, it does not depend on us, and the other side knows its own business best; but depend upon it we shall use our utmost endeavours to bring our case forward, and if they will drive us into court, why they must take the consequences, they will have a pretty bill to pay."

Now this was an admission as to the expenses of the suit that our hero by no means relished, and he began a long series of questions as to his liability. Gosling assured him there was no doubt of the ultimate result, but Seton left the office with a heavy heart at the prospect of the legal abyss into which he seemed to be plunging. He began to detest his joke about the tub of Diogenes, as Gosling, in wishing him good day, rode it to death with the assurance that he would roll the old tub along as quickly as he could with safety.

"Good morning, my dear sir, good morning; a stationary tub, ha! ha! very good indeed, ve-ry good, cap-i-tal; good morning."

"I wish to goodness I had never began it," thought Seton, "I should have done much better not to fight a man like Fermor; confound Gar-

ston, file a bill indeed ! I might as well bite a file. And this beggar Gosling, with his jokes and metaphors—his Alexander and his grease—confound them, and him, and the law suit altogether."

CHAPTER XII.

GARSTON FAILS IN MAKING MONEY.

THE dreariness of London in November, the gloomy solitude of his lodgings in Winchcom Street, his life passed in reading till his eyes were heavy and his back ached, the listening for postman's raps which only brought matter for fresh anxiety, wore away Seton's spirits. All buoyancy seemed to be departing from him; naturally gay and bright, the horrible dungeon-like gloom seemed crushing him down and down into a slough of despondency. He could no longer enjoy his walks, and he had managed to catch a cold. There he sat day after day, night after night, over his books, coughing and aching.

Once in the week, as regularly as daylight follows night, there came a letter from Gladys. Then for a while the gloom vanished, the dungeon walls spread out into palace arches through which came glimpses of pleasant fields,

of summer woods and lawns where she roamed, of birds that sang, and she the blithest bird of all; of gentle summer nights where stars were shining, and he and she were wandering hand in hand; down the long reaches of this dream river sparkled the moonbeams mid which he and she were gliding in a fairy bark, and all the night was lovely with a glow that seemed to emanate from her.

These letters of Gladys were an epitome of herself, full of love and brightness, girlish and frolicsome in their fancy, yet with a vein of tenderness and thoughtfulness running through and underlying all. She had no idea of the wretched life he led; he had no secrets from her but he failed to tell her all the truth, he kept his sufferings to himself. She thought of him as leading a quiet studious life, she had no notion of the discomforts of common cheap lodgings. She thought his mind was occupied with his books, she knew nothing of his great anxiety about the law suit. He had spoken of it to her, as others had done to him, as just filing a bill. When writing to her he managed to get up some little topic on which to expatiate, made

little jokes about history, and so filled his slender letters.

December wore on, and the weather was much the same; it was now another period of legal inactivity. The Christmas holidays stayed all proceedings.

Had Seton been well enough he would have gone down to the "Quarries" for Christmas; as it was, he feared to go lest Gladys should see how haggard he was looking, so he made excuses and remained solitary in Winchcom Street.

With the new year he got a little better, his cough became less violent, he was able to get about again, and he took to passing a good deal of his time in the re-opened courts of equity, trying to judge from other cases what the result of his own would be.

He was struck with the long-windedness of counsel and the patience of the judges, but he gained little information of any use to him, unless it was useful to know that equity is by no means synonymous with justice. Frequently when right was clearly on one side, judgment was given for the other; often judges spoke as if they would like to command right to prevail, but

were compelled to order wrong to conquer. It was all a puzzle, and seemed to depend on which lawyers could rake up the oldest and the mustiest decisions of men possibly not half so wise as the judge then sitting. Seton began to fear much for the success of his suit: he was only in the right, and that seemed to go for so very little.

At last "Herold *versus* Fermor" was set down for hearing, and Seton watched the list to note how rapidly his turn approached. He had to watch for a long time.

* * * * * *

It was at this period that Garston thought the opportunity was come to strike his blow. He had been much knocked about lately; the Great Wheel Mine had paid no dividend, on the contrary there had been a call for more money; the Compressed Rails and Continuous Sleepers Company was in liquidation; London and the Marshes Railway Shares were unsaleable, as were several of his other stocks and shares. A thousand or two would put him on his legs, and keep him going till the Great Wheel turned again and the other things got right; the Compressed Rails

were gone, but enough remained if he could only raise the wind for a little while. Now he would try and squeeze Fermor.

At Christmas, Garston had gone down to Avonshire, and he had there done all he could to injure Seton, by spreading lies of the wild life our hero led in London. Emma was depicted as one who had helped to seduce Seton into a course of lawlessness, and who assisted at wild orgies held even in broad daylight. Garston had many friends round Chippington, and they gladly welcomed him and his stories; with a certain class he was very popular, and he took this opportunity of plundering such of his friends as he could induce to buy shares or enter into speculations in which he was interested.

When among these congenial spirits, he would say—

"By Jove, I don't set up for a saint, but young Herold beats everything; my little parties were fast enough, but my worthy brother-in-law found them much too slow for him, and he and his lot absolutely brazened it out right in Richmond Park, dashed if they didn't; I can't stand that low sort of thing, you might as well play

kiss in the ring at Greenwich, and much more innocently."

Before Garston left to return to London some of these friends of his learnt to distrust his honesty at cards and in other matters, but they believed his lies regarding Seton, and they spread the tale of his misdeeds.

The first intimation Mr. Fermor received of Garston's project was an anonymous letter telling him that chance had thrown in the way of the writer some information that would be very valuable to him in his suit with Mr. Herold. The anonymous writer sent an address where letters would reach Garston. Of this communication Mr Fermor took no notice.

Once more Garston tried the same proceeding, this time mentioning something of the exact point about which the writer wished to enlighten him, mentioning also the source from which his knowledge sprang.

This made Mr. Fermor somewhat uneasy, for he could not tell how much the dismissed clerk had been able to find out concerning his doings; still he kept silence.

At last Garston, growing impatient, wrote

plump and plain that he wished to see Mr. Fermor and treat with him; this time he gave him his name in full.

A polite request to call on Mr. Fermor, in Charlton Square, was the answer.

Garston presented himself at the hour named, and was shown into a library, where Mr. Fermor was sitting. His name was announced, and Garston advanced towards Mr. Fermor.

"Pray be seated, sir. I believe I am indebted to you for this letter, and I am obliged by your favouring me with your presence here this morning. May I ask what is your object in making this communication to me, and why do you so interest yourself in my affairs?"

"The meaning is exactly in keeping with the contents of the letter. I have accidentally come across a piece of information, and I have therefore written to inform you that I have done so, as you are the person most concerned in the affair, except, perhaps, Mr. Herold."

"You are, if I do not mistake, the Mr. Garston who married Miss Jane Herold?"

"Yes, you were down at Westerham at the time."

"Precisely, I thought my memory was correct. You say you have come across a piece of information that concerns me; without at present pausing to consider the means by which you became possessed of such information, allow me to ask in what way it concerns you?"

"Me? Oh, I have an interest in the case."

"Hardly, I think; you have received your late wife's portion, and have no further claim on the property. You are not even a nominal party to the suit. In any event you must know that such a letter as yours is, to say the least of it, irregular. You are, yourself, a solicitor, if I recollect rightly?"

"Oh, yes, I am a solicitor, but that has nothing to do with it."

"So I should imagine."

"Excuse my saying, Mr. Fermor, that I am not here to beat about the bush; since you have given up the active duties of your profession you may have much leisure, but my time is fully occupied and therefore too valuable to be wasted. I came here for your convenience, not my own."

"Really you are very kind; but I hardly see, perhaps you will explain."

"I will put the thing into a very few words."

"If you please."

It, however, took Garston a good many words to explain to Mr. Fermor that he had become possessed of information about the Annuity purchased from Lord Holborn, which information was to the effect that such purchase had been made with money of which Mr. Fermor was trustee, conjointly with Colonel Warrington, such money being in his hands for a different purpose. That the whole affair had been kept secret from the late Mr. Herold, and in short he, Garston, was in a position to prove that the purchase Mr. Fermor had made was a breach of trust and fraudulent, as it was made by and for himself with Herold trust money.

"In continuation of your favours, will you kindly tell me your object in communicating all this to me? Granting for a moment that there is a fraction of truth in your narrative, why do you come to me instead of going with this ingenious tale to your brother-in-law; surely he would have been more likely to believe in it than I am?"

"I should think my reason was obvious."

"I fear I must be very dull."

"It is hardly likely you don't comprehend that if a man knows something of such importance about another man that he can pretty well upset him, and he goes to that other man and shows him his knowledge, it must be with a view to treat with him in a friendly way."

"Ah, exactly; if I may venture to disentangle your man and your other man, I presume it comes to this—you know, or believe you know, something, and you want to sell your silence."

"If you prefer your way of putting it, I am sure I have no objection."

"Why do you not sell your knowledge to your brother-in-law?"

"Because I prefer to sell it to you."

Mr. Fermor read the dark shadow that swept over Garston's face when he mentioned his brother-in-law quite correctly; he continued—

"It is not for me to inquire further into your motives if you do not choose to mention them; but it certainly seems curious that you should wish to serve me rather than your own brother-in-law."

"I don't wish to serve my brother-in-law, and

the knowledge I possess is more valuable to you than to him, as it can do you an injury."

"And you are here to-day to get that value?"

"I am here to-day at your request."

"Precisely, but in consequence of your communications. Your object is such as I have described, I presume?"

"Very much so."

"Then all I have to do is to thank you for showing me how little you really know about my affairs. As I am prepared to explain in Court every incident of my trusteeship and of my transactions with the late Mr. Herold, I have no desire to purchase your secret, if such it may be called."

"Then you think a trustee may use trust-moneys for his own benefit?"

"I hardly think it will be useful to discuss equity practice here; probably at Chippington you had not a great deal of Chancery business."

"I am not here to talk about Chippington."

"Really I stand corrected; and I think I may add there is nothing more of any sort for us to converse on."

"Then you absolutely refuse to treat with me?"

"Even if I was the rascal you are good enough to suppose me, it would not also be necessary that I should be fool enough to put myself in your hands; as it is, there is nothing to treat about, and you are only wasting time you told me was valuable."

"You think yourself wonderfully astute, and you imagine that with your knowledge of the twists and turns of Chancery you can slip out of this mess as you have out of your partnership, do you?"

"I think our interview is ended."

"You will repent this, Mr. Fermor; your damned smooth tongue won't carry you through all your cursed swindles."

"I object to bad language, and should much prefer your expending your profanity anywhere but in my house. I think if you will allow me I will ring the bell."

So saying, Mr. Fermor rang the bell, and Garston left Charlton Square rabid with rage.

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Although it rather anticipates some of the other events of this story, it may be as well here to follow Garston's career for a few weeks.

Entirely checkmated by Fermor, unable to get anything from that sagacious gentleman, and nearly arrived at the end of his tether, Garston now plunged as deeply as he could into gambling transactions of all sorts. On the Stock Exchange he rarely won; but at cards he was more successful, and he really managed to make a very good book for the Derby. One of the horses he had backed at a long shot came quite to the front, and the day before the race the betting was only two to one against him. Garston thought this was his turning point, and spoilt his book by continuing to back his choice at these odds; intoxicated with his anticipated success and probably partly so with wine, for of late he had become a hard drinker, on this last night his usual discretion failed him, and on the morning of the great race he stood to stand or fall by that one horse. If he won his winnings would certainly be enormous, but if he lost . . . . . And he did lose—the favourite broke down—was not even placed!

Garston, well aware that his London career was ended, dined quietly in his own rooms, and went

out afterwards to see what he could pick up to aid him in his flight.

There was a certain club he occasionally went to, at which such games as loo were played. On this, the Derby night, of course such a resort was crowded, and high play of all sorts was going on. Room was made for him at the table where the highest stakes were played, indeed the game there was unlimited loo. The play went on, and eventually blind hookey was substituted for loo. Never had there been such a deal as Garston's; they could not put him out; he won all the money at the table and more besides; the usual rule at the club was broken through and I.O.U.s were passed.

At eight o'clock the encounter ended, and when Garston got back to his chambers he found he had won about sixteen hundred pounds, of which he had the greater part already in his pocket in gold, notes, and cheques, only about two hundred and fifty was in I.O.U.s.

He poured it all out on the table and counted it; then he gnashed his teeth thinking what a fool he had been to back the favourite for such a

stake. It would take all this money he had won and as much again to pay his Derby losses. "It is a good sum to start afresh on, though," he reflected; "I will get together all I can from my other things and then make myself scarce."

"Still," he thought, "I should like to receive the two hundred and fifty—those damned fellows playing on tick and breaking the rules of the club, they deserve to be hauled up for it before the committee."

In the end he came to the conclusion that he would not bolt till he had got this two hundred and fifty; he would not be cheated out of that, and there was no hurry; settling day was not till Monday, and this was only Thursday.

He had no inclination for sleep, so he bathed and breakfasted. Then he went out and realized all he could from the wreck of his securities which were numerous but of little value; he had, as will be seen hereafter, traded on other money besides his own, and he now picked up from all impartially. The pickings were but small, only some twelve hundred pounds all put together. He paid in to his credit the cheques he had received last night, then he took a short nap, dined,

went to a theatre, and afterwards to the club where he had won the money the night before. He was determined to get the two hundred and fifty.

There was only a small muster, but plenty to make up a game; his debtors, however, were absent. He joined the table just to pass the time till the men who owed him the money arrived, they were sure to come, as no debts were permitted to run over one clear day under pain of instant expulsion. It was contrary to practice t allow debts at all, but that was occasionally winked at; the other rule was strictly observed.

The play went against Garston; he lost and he drank, then he lost more. They were playing loo, and that game requires an especially cool head. He was over tired and over excited. He inwardly cursed his debtors and at last he did so outwardly.

A friend of one of them said, "Shut up, Garston; don't abuse men because they don't hurry in to pay you, there is time enough; you need not be so greedy, you won enough last night."

"I don't see what that has to do with it."

"Well, I do."

This ruffled Garston still more, and he continued to play with total want of judgment as well as bad luck. At last he was loo'd for a very large sum. He rose to go, and held out the I.O.U.s for the two hundred and fifty, saying—"Will any one cash these?"

The man who had spoken before gave him the money for them, and said—"You are behaving very badly to men who have always been honourable."

"Damn their honour, what have I to do with that?"

"Very little, I should think. Now will you settle with me for your last loo."

"I will give you my I.O.U. as your friends did to me."

"Well, no; after what has taken place, and your heavy winnings last night, I must request cash as far as you have it, and a cheque for the balance."

Every one sided with the last speaker, and Garston very reluctantly paid up. Before he left, the men who had owed him the money came in, and it was only by a hasty retreat that Garston managed to escape being kicked out.

Instead of receiving his two hundred and fifty

he had lost that back, and three hundred more in cash, as well as the amount of the cheque he had given for the balance of his losings, another hundred and eighty. He had still remaining over two thousand pounds, and he had a small book on the Oaks. So he went down to Epsom to see what would come of that. There he thought he would make one final plunge to recover himself, he felt he should be miserable anywhere but in London, and he determined to make a last effort to retrieve his fortunes.

Here he had to bet with professionals for cash, and he distributed a thousand pounds on a very good thing at five to one.

It was a magnificent race, and the winner was cheered to the echo; the mare that carried Garston's money was beaten by a short head!

Worn out, and almost crushed, Garston drank deeply, and lost about two hundred at whist at another club. There he cursed and swore, and was eventually taken home in a cab, and helped to bed by a friendly fellow, who said—

"Garston is the greatest blackguard out, but I don't like to let a fellow be taken to the station house, or worse."

It was now Saturday, and no more time was to be lost, so that when Garston got rid of the effects of his big drink, he went at once to the bank and drew out his balance.

On the Monday he was much missed, as that morning he had started from Liverpool to Auckland in the clipper "Star of Hope."

He had failed in making money in England, perhaps a colony would allow him a fresh chance.

Now we must return to Seton, whose law suit was set down for hearing.

CHAPTER XIII.

TRIALS.

THE day of the trial arrived; the great day of battle dawned. Seton went down to Mr. Gosling's office, and then, accompanied by a clerk, he went over to the Roll's Court. Mr. Gosling had to hold a consultation with the barristers, and would be in court later.

Before this great day arrived, Seton had been compelled to go again to his bankers and procure a fresh loan for two hundred pounds. This time there were more difficulties made, but in the end the money was forthcoming. On receiving it, Mr. Gosling, perfectly cheerful as ever, congratulated Seton on the remarkable rapidity with which their case had been pressed through for trial. He gave himself much credit for his alertness in the matter—the real fact being that Mr. Fermor had not wished for further delay—he was prepared to meet the case; the delay he had already secured was quite sufficient, and now he

wished the suit over; he had plenty of other things to attend to.

In court, Seton found there was an uncompleted case still on, so he strolled about in the vicinity waiting till his turn came.

Presently Mr. Gosling came over with the junior counsel, the one who had got up the whole case. Seton had never seen him before, so they were introduced to each other, and our hero gladly listened to Mr. Hernshaw's assurances that all would go well with them. Mr. Hernshaw was of a sanguine turn of mind; he was a little, eager, dark man, and he seemed to Seton sharp enough to be confided in; so he hung upon his words—not that Mr. Hernshaw committed himself to an absolute opinion, but he was very encouraging.

"I got two verdicts yesterday, Mr. Herold," he said, "one will be enough to-day, won't it? not that it will be to-day though, either, they can't finish to-day."

"Do you really think we are safe?"

"Safe is a strong word as applied to law, but really in this case I don't think I should object to go so far as to say—quite between ourselves, you

know—that provided they are unable to answer our allegations fully and fairly, I really do believe, and I don't hesitate to say, in confidence, that in my opinion it will be very difficult to sustain an adverse position; but really I must not go too far and too fast—you know the Italian proverb, Mr. Herold!"

"In any case, I trust you think the costs are safe?"

"You will say 'safe,' Mr. Herold; now I would rather go and play with a cheerful tiger than consider anything safe at law; no, not *safe*, as you mean the word—but I do believe they will be given out of the estate, unless his Lordship is very cranky."

Hardly elated with Hernshaw's not over extravagantly expressed opinion, Seton got Mr. Gosling on one side, and asked what their leader, the great Mr. Northam, had said.

"Very little, my dear sir, ve-ry little; he never says much except in court, then he says plenty, ha, ha."

"But I suppose he gave you some notion of what he did think?—he didn't leave you quite in the dark as to his opinion, surely?"

"Not in the dark, no, no; he is too great a luminary for that, ha, ha; oh, dear no, not in the dark."

"Then what did he say? do tell me at once."

"Really, Mr. Herold, really now, I thought you liked a little joke. I am sure I never, believe me, ne-ver before had a client who so thoroughly appreciated my little jokes, and I may say, capped them too; yes, capped them. I am sure, whatever may be the result of the suit, I shall always look back with pleasure on the affair that threw us together. What, Turner, wanted am I?" . . This to his clerk.

"Do tell me what he said, one word will do; does Mr. Northam think we are in the right or not?"

"Quite right, quite right; I assure you he thinks you are entirely justified." . . . . . Here Gosling seized Turner's arm, and absolutely trotted away muttering in his teeth—"Quite justified in spending your substance on law if you think fit; only give us such asses as this young fool for clients, and we shall be content; I think that is about Northam's opinion. Turner, I had to beckon to you twice, don't let this occur again."

The Court having finished the other case, adjourned for luncheon. Seton, at Hernshaw's invitation, eat a chop with him at his chambers.

Then the suit began.

Mr. Northam made a long speech, passed very fluently over the whole case, dwelt on the hardships Seton had suffered, recounted the wrongs done to the deceased Mr. Herold, and finally, dwelling with immense force on the breach of trust, concluded with words of scathing invective hurled at Mr. Fermor, who was sitting just opposite him at the counsel's table right underneath the Master of the Rolls, and flanked by his ex-partner, Blyte."

Seton wondered that a man could sit quiet whilst he was being so denounced, but Mr. Fermor showed no symptom of even hearing the denouncement.

Next Hernshaw rose, and put in a lot of documents, afterwards delivering an oration which seemed to send the Master to sleep. He however woke up at the pithiest part, and rose for the day.

Next morning the case was resumed, and Hernshaw having ended rather lamely, Mr. Kerslaw, Q.C., M.P., pulled himself up by the

gown, and had, what seemed to Seton, a private chat with the Master. Then all of a sudden he started on the defence with a preliminary "My Lud."

Now Seton's eyes began to open; he had never before heard any argument that told for the other side, and he was stunned at the way in which his case seemed crumbling into dust. If so and so had been the case, he had been told—yes, if indeed. As it was now put, nothing of the sort ever had been the case; Mr. Kerslaw said if there was in all England an injured, innocent man, it was Mr. Fermor, who had for years toiled and struggled in the interest of his clients, he had carried on his shoulders enough to have sunk ten legal firms of less acumen. He had been in a manner the saviour of all connected with the Holborn Estates; had it not been for him those estates would have become a very waste, a desert, only fitted to receive such outcastings of legal rubbish and potsherds as might from time to time have been ejected thereon; they would have become an ash-hole for the reception of such refuse as irrecoverable judgment debts; they would have been a void, a blank, a very desola-

tion." Here Mr. Kerslaw rapped the table—"aye, a very desolation. In the very heart of London there would have been a plague spot that no man could purify, a sink that no man could cleanse."

Returning to a more sober line of speech, Mr. Kerslaw epitomised the history of many years; he detailed the proceedings at many interviews with the late Mr. Herold; he read letters from that gentleman showing his entire trust and confidence in Mr. Fermor, and his willingness to leave all to his judgment. Then he thundered at Seton, who was sitting behind him, red with bashfulness and anger. Could it be the son of a man who had not only been a particular and personal friend of the defendant, but who also had written those letters he had just read, who had brought this suit? What conduct was this to him who had absolutely saved a large portion of his father's fortune? How was this step to be explained away, except—and he hoped it was so—that he was one with a mind so limited that he had listened to ill advice, and so caused all this annoyance to his father's friend? He could forgive youth and inexperience; all were not blest with reasoning faculties sufficient to guard themselves from ill

advice, but those who had given such advice were deeply to be blamed.

He saw the solicitor for the plaintiff was a Mr. Gosling. Well, he should not comment upon that; doubtless Mr. Gosling was a wise man, a most estimable gentleman in his profession; whether he had shown his usual wisdom in allowing his client to bring this suit was another matter. But he thought his Lordship would agree with him that such an equity as was now sought for was a thing unheard of.

"My learned friend," continued Kerslaw, "has said a great deal about a breach of trust; now I am here to acknowledge that breach of trust. We own the breach of trust, we do not deny it, we glory in it. In all probability that breach of trust was the salvation of the Holborn Estates. At his own risk the defendant stood boldly forward, and took upon himself to save Mr Herold's property. I say at his own risk, and it is not necessary for me to point out in this court that a solicitor is answerable for his advice and his actions, that his estate is liable if loss accrues through his mismanagement. But there was no mismanagement, and there has been no loss. By

securing the annuity in question, and so protecting the Holborn Estates from some stranger coming in and commencing a litigation that at that time might have been fatal, the property has been put on a sound basis. My learned friend has dwelt at considerable length, and with all his great powers of oratory, on what he terms the concealment of this investment from Mr. Herold. He has stigmatized the proceedings as secret—as if secresy was a crime, and reticence an iniquity. I shall not attempt to emulate my friend's oration. I shall merely reply that there was no attempt at concealment; it was not advertised in the 'Times,' or cried aloud from the house-tops, and it was certainly not shouted into the ears of people who might have been hostile; but can we believe that, seeing the terms Mr. Herold and the defendant were on, nothing passed between them in private about this matter; of course no record of such conversation would remain. My Lord, I really cannot conceive how a case where such an equity as this is prayed can have been brought before your Lordship. I feel sure that your Lordship will at once dismiss this bill with costs, and not allow my client to be harrowed

into rendering the account sought. His time is more than occupied with the winding up of his stewardship of affairs connected with this great estate; it is really too bad that he should be put to the pains and penalties of a law suit, when he requires all the energies that his time of life have left him to finish his Herculean task. My Lord, that is my reply to the case of my learned friend."

So saying Mr. Kerslaw threw his brief down on the table as though it was a thing of the past, and left the court to use his powers of volubility before another judge.

After this the trial became very flat; the defendant's junior read and referred to a good many cases. Among them was one which seemed to interest the Master, and he asked several questions about it, as though he was anxious to upset its decision. This gave Seton hopes, as he did not know that the asking of these questions was by no means a good sign.

In the end judgment was deferred, and the Court rose.

A week elapsed before judgment was given; Gosling was still sanguine, but no longer so as to the absolute issue of the suit—only as to costs.

"A very clever man, my dear sir, ve-ry clever; you see we knew nothing of those letters. Hernshaw was quite right; had it not been for those letters of your father, I have no manner of doubt we should have succeeded. In these matters letters are often absolute calamities. Never mind, my dear sir, you have had a shot at him, and the estate will pay the shot—we are safe there."

It turned out, however, that Mr. Gosling had been over sanguine. When the judgment was given it was for the defendant, and the Master of the Rolls said he saw no reason why costs should not follow the verdict.

Utterly cast down, Seton talked the matter over with Mr. Gosling, who assumed to be furious. He said it was an iniquity, a thing calculated to bring justice into contempt; it was a judgment that must be effaced, blotted out from the records by the decision of a higher tribunal.

A conference was held at Mr. Northam's chambers; all the points of the case were gone into. Hernshaw thought there were several good grounds of appeal. Northam thought at

any rate costs could be got rid of. So notice of appeal was given.

Seton was the more ready to assent to this arrangement, as he did not know where in the world he was to get money to pay the present costs, and he was told that till the appeal was heard no payments would be required.

In writing to Gladys, he made as light as he could of the adverse decision, and dwelt on the appeal. She was very glad that the trial was so far over, and wished it was all ended, so that Seton would be free to go back to Avonshire. He had written that his presence was still necessary in London. He did not feel equal to meeting Gladys; he felt so worn and weary, he feared she would read his sufferings in his face.

The excitement of the trial had told on him very severely, and he suffered from want of sleep; his cough too had got worse again. The weather had become warmer, but he had neither strength nor energy to walk much, so he sat in his dingy room and read, trying to banish the present by throwing his thoughts into the past. By day he read, by night he lay awake, or phantasms of Chancery proceedings mocked at him; as it

seemed to him, Kerslaws innumerable hitched back their gowns and eternally poured forth their oratory; for ever these Kerslaws banged their briefs upon the table; for ever the judge slept calmly—how he did envy that judge.

Our hero was roused from this monotony by a note from Gosling, informing him that he had received notice through Blyte that the mortgagees of the thirty thousand pounds secured on the Westerham estate had given the necessary six month's notice of calling in their money.

Then it became evident to Seton that Westerham must go; there was nothing else for it. He must part with those woods and waters that he loved so well, the lawns and terraced paths, the trees in which he had built his houses, the pleasant fields and pastures, the wilds amongst which Gladys and he had roamed as children —worse than all he must part from the people he had hoped to benefit.

There was but one chance of saving the home of his fathers, there was only one quarter to which he could turn with any hope, there was only one man that could help him. Only one

who had the means, and who might have the inclination.

He consulted with Gosling as to getting the mortgage renewed, but Gosling thought it would be very difficult. And there was the sixteen thousand settlement money to provide for; the Sarncombe trustees had already hinted that it would be convenient to receive their principal; then there was also the bank debt. Privately, Gosling thought it was a capital thing that this notice had been given, for when the estate was sold, he presumed there would be a surplus that would come in handy for the expenses in Herold *v.* Fermor, so he strongly advised selling.

The sale, too, would give pickings for a solicitor, "very nice pickings indeed, ve-ry nice," Gosling thought.

Seeing no other way out of it, Seton, before finally moving in the matter, wrote to his uncle, and gave him a full account of all that had taken place. He ended by putting the question to him, would he take over the mortgage, or buy the estate at a valuation?

Inwardly, Seton argued, "If he intends to leave me his money as he led me to expect, what dif-

ference can it make to him, in any case the investment is good enough." So he urged the matter on his uncle. Even if the colonel was offended, still our hero thought he should not care so long as Westerham was saved, though that saving should be for some other member of his family. He thought he would far rather see Wren or Sarncombe ruling there than a stranger; he himself would be content with a very small appanage provided it was sufficient on which to maintain a wife.

The letter was sent, and some days elapsed before the following answer reached Winchcom Street:—

"My Dear Seton,

"Your letter has been very grievous to me; that you should have so managed matters that you are now compelled to forfeit Westerham is to me very painful. Your law suit seems to be a complete failure, what the Lord Chancellor may do for you I know not. You must recollect that, although I did not oppose your going to law, yet I before gave you my opinion as to legal proceedings. You ask me to purchase Westerham; to this I must give a decided nega-

tive. I do not at my time of life wish to embark on fresh fields of expenditure; I am content with my quarters at Creamington. Feeling sure that you have made a false step in turning Mr. Fermor from a friend into an enemy, and much regretting my inability to help you in the distressing circumstances in which you have placed yourself,

"I remain as ever,

"Your affectionate uncle,

"CHRISTOPHER WARRINGTON.

"P.S. I should have replied to your letter sooner but I had left home for a few days, having married the lady you knew here as Eliza, and the house required renovating."

* * * * * *

After this letter Seton felt that Westerham was gone from him, and for the moment even this misfortune was swallowed up in the astonishment produced by the postcript to his uncle's letter.

"His uncle married to Eliza!" It must be that his senses were leaving him—was he asleep or suffering from one of his night-mares? "Good heavens, Colonel Warrington married to his maid!

Nothing more improbable than the colonel's marrying at all could have been conceived, but to marry his maid—Eliza—'the lady you knew here as Eliza' . . . . there must be some mistake, there must be some other Eliza. He was in his dotage. Or, after all, wasn't it his joke, he always had been fond of a bad joke; it was impossible he could have married Eliza, he, of all men in the world, he who objected to marriages at all, who had been as steel or adamant in all things where the heart was concerned."

Then Seton reflected that the heart had nothing to do with it—his uncle only wanted a nurse, and he might have thought to secure one by this marriage; he remembered that the colonel never used to scold Eliza, that he had confided in her, even to his cellar key.

To satisfy himself thoroughly in the matter, he determined to run down to Creamington; there he would make one other effort to induce his uncle to purchase Westerham, or assist in some way to keep it from passing into the hands of strangers.

* * * * * *

Wellingtonia Lodge looked, if possible, more

trim than ever. The first change perceptible was, that instead of Eliza, the door was opened by a man, a solemn man, who surveyed Seton from the head of the steps, and without opening the little gates at their foot, took from him his card and retreated.

In a few minutes he returned, unlocked the gates and ushered Seton into the drawing room, where a work box and something of worsted work at once confirmed the truth of the postcript.

Presently the door opened and in came Eliza, who was looking very handsome and very well, as if matrimony agreed with her. She came towards Seton smiling, and with open hand.

"I am so glad to see you, Seton, it is very kind of you to have come down at once."

Seton blushed, shook hands, and found himself stammering something which Eliza interpreted into a congratulation.

"So kind of you, Seton; I always did like you so much, now you know we are relations. Do sit down, and let us have a good chat." And down sat the lady on the sofa with Seton by her side.

"The colonel is not very well to day," she said

as she settled herself against the pillows, so facing Seton; "I have persuaded him to lie down upstairs; I left him asleep, but, you will, I daresay, be able to see him later. In the meanwhile there is no hurry is there?—it is so nice to have you here, so good of you to come."

"I hope there is nothing serious the matter with my uncle?"

"Oh dear no, you see he has been, for him, quite rackety lately, leaving home and all that. Poor dear colonel, he is unequal to such changes now, and I have to nurse him very carefully, only a woman can see to these things properly; people will talk, so we thought it better to get married, and make everything quite comfortable. I was determined to do my duty by him, but of course I could not wholly sacrifice myself. Now I am your aunt it is all as it should be." And Eliza smiled on Seton who felt very uncomfortable, and quite unable to offer any suitable observation. Eliza, however, relieved him from this obligation by changing the subject.

Shaking her finger at him, she said—"I am afraid you have been a sad, naughty boy, getting into scrapes with lawyers, and I don't know what all."

"My law suit has turned out very badly, I must own."

"Never mind, when things are worst they soonest mend, you know. Your uncle is terribly put out about it all, but I will do what I can."

Seton was willing to accept even this alliance, if thereby Westerham might be saved. So he went into matters with her, while she listened and smiled on him.

After they had chatted a long while about his affairs, Mrs. Warrington said—"Now I will go and see if the colonel is awake for you would like to see him after coming so far, wouldn't you? not that I think you will do much good with him at present. I myself think it will be best not to trouble him, but I will do just what you like about it."

"If you really think so, perhaps I had better not disturb him."

"It is as you like, and I only wish to do what is most for your interest in the matter."

It ended in Seton returning to London without seeing his uncle, Eliza having undertaken to do all she could to induce the colonel to purchase Westerham.

No letter reaching Seton from Creamington, after waiting a fortnight, he wrote once more to his uncle asking if he would do anything.

By return of post came the reply :—

"My Dear Seton,

"I am astonished that you should continue to worry me about Westerham. I have neither health nor inclination to enter into the matter. Your conduct has deeply grieved me, and the constant worry I endure in thinking over your affairs is affecting my general health. I must beg that you do not further afflict me with these matters ; at my time of life such things are hard to bear. Your young shoulders are strong, you should remember that mine are weak, and learn to bear your own burdens. Your aunt wishes to be kindly remembered.

"Believe me to remain,

"Your affectionate uncle,

"Christopher Warrington."

CHAPTER XIV.

FAREWELL TO WESTERHAM.

THE fate of Westerham being sealed, Gosling recommended a firm of auctioneers; and those distinguished men, whose names were at that time so often to be met with in the advertisement sheet of the "Times," Messrs. Smith, Jones and Twist, were set to work.

It was a sad day for Seton when he read in the newspaper that the above auctioneers were instructed to offer for public competition, unless previously disposed of by private treaty, "All that valuable freehold estate known as Westerham, in the county of Avonshire, situated near an excellent market town, and enjoying all the privileges that naturally belonged to a property mentioned in the Doomsday Book, the exclusive rights of fishing in three miles of water, of pasturage on the common, and of sporting in general. The mansion contains . . . . and is situated in park-like grounds, richly timbered,

and undulating to the river . . . . . the woods are full of very improving timber . . . and the whole is situated in the very centre of the A.B.C. hunting country."

There was much more in the usual style of that celebrated firm. The description was calculated to make a possessor's soul swell with pride, but to a dispossessed it only brought a bitter smile. Seton now realized that he had lost for ever the home of his fathers; it was not, perhaps, all that the auctioneers represented it to be, but it was everything to him; he would sooner possess Westerham than any other place in England. He had known for some time that it was departed from him, but these lines of print stamped the fact as with a final seal.

Now he fully realized his position; how vapid and misspent his life had been; he had only taken one important step in life on his own responsibility, and that had been a wretched failure; his law-suit was a miserable mistake; he might possibly save much of the expense, but he had undoubtedly been a fool to enter on it. If he had not gone to war with Fermor, that gentleman might have pulled him through in some

way he thought, and he blamed himself severely. Undoubtedly, as it appeared to him, the foreclosure of the mortgage would not have taken place had Fermor still been friendly, and time, which might have fought for him, would have been gained.

Mr. Twist went down and made a valuation of the estate, and reported it as worth pretty well fifty thousand pounds. As Seton had always understood from his father that sixty thousand was the lowest sum he considered it to be worth, he tried to argue the matter with Smith, the senior partner.

"We can thoroughly depend on our Mr. Twist; people are very apt to over-value their own properties. I am sure you will excuse my saying it, but business is business. The late Mr. Herold probably imagined that because he had spent certain sums on the estate it had increased in value by the amount of those sums; now there is no greater fallacy than that; in the sale of an estate such as yours, it is the rent roll, the timber, and the mansion that have to be paid for by a purchaser; sums spent on fishponds, gardens, fountains, and general ornamentation are never

regained. Again, as to the valuation you mention, I hardly know how it could have been arrived at, as I believe it had not been under the hammer for a long time."

"It has been in our family for five generations."

"Ah, exactly, then the valuation must have been a—excuse my saying it—a fancy one."

"I always thought it was worth what my father told me, at least sixty thousand."

"Doubtless, and very naturally, but the thing is, on what did your father found those figures? Now, look at it in this way—I am not giving you Twist's figures, but take it in the rough—the income is supposed to be fifteen hundred a year, in reality it is less, but call it even that, and say thirty year's purchase, that makes forty-five thousand, and say five for house and timber, the latter, as you know, is a little short; well, there you have the fifty thousand Twist arrives at. Of course my figures are mere skeletons."

Seton had no reply to this, so gave in, feeling his fortune was becoming like what Mr. Smith said his figures were—bit by bit, it was leaving him—nearly all the flesh had gone.

Weeks became months, and no one would give the fifty thousand; times were dull and purchasers scarce. Poor Seton grown thin and haggard with his cough that had never left him, and now increased as November once more crushed the smoke of London down into his lungs, sat day by day in Winchcom Street waiting for news that never came, waiting for notice of trial and for sale of the estate.

At last it was evident that if the estate must be sold, a lesser sum than even the fifty thousand must be accepted. Mr. Smith told Seton that he had a purchaser at forty-six thousand who was ready to complete at once. "It is a question for your decision, Mr. Herold, and Mr. Twist still adheres to his original valuation, and very possibly we might yet get the sum he mentioned, but you see there is the element of time. Perhaps you will consult with your friends and let us know your decision."

"Thank you, I will consult," replied Seton. As he walked out of the offices he quite startled a junior clerk with his laugh, as he said half aloud, "Consult with my friends!"

Guss was at the other side of the world, and

Ralph was on the continent, so Mr. Gosling represented his friends. "His friends, indeed!"

There was, at any rate, one good point about Gosling—he was always to be found at his office; the brass plate itself seemed hardly more movable than he was, neither was it brighter or smoother than its proprietor.

Gosling received Seton with effusion, as usual. Now that he saw his way to the certain payment of his bill of costs, he took even extra pleasure in receiving Seton, gave him as much of his spare time as he liked, condoled with him, even tried to cheer him . . . . and entered it all in his note book.

Seton never considered that each friendly chat, each little joke, each cheery laugh, were all items of account; he never expected to see set out on paper, in most clerkly writing, a synopsis of each little conversation, a general outline of what had been mentioned at each of his visits.

He now consulted Gosling as to the acceptation of the forty-six thousand for the estate. "It seems very little though, when my father always told me it was worth over sixty thousand."

"My dear sir, your late estimable father was

probably of a sanguine temperament, it is a most desirable thing to possess—a great blessing and a great happiness to those who are so endowed. But as you must be aware there are others, and these far more numerous, who do not possess this delightful and amiable characteristic. It is very rare indeed to find purchasers with that most pleasing trait, a proneness to look at the bright side of things; on the contrary, they are far too apt to carp, and, if I may use the word, niggle; they fail in large-heartedness, and are unwilling to accept the more glowing views of vendors. It is impossible not to note these facts, and, drawing my deductions from them, I should feel inclined to advise you to accept the offer you mention as having been made, the more so as our time is now getting very short, and if the mortgage is foreclosed there will be the ve-ry dee-vil to pay. Then, you know there are the marriage settlement moneys, better pay them than the dee-vil, ha ha, my dear sir."

"But if we only get forty-six thousand we shall not be able to clear everything; that is only enough to cover the mortgage and sixteen thousand to Wren and Sarncombe; there is also the

bank debt, and the auctioneer will have to get something, and there will be, I daresay, other expenses."

"Oh, Smith, Jones and Twist are not unreasonable, three hundred on sale and other little expenses of survey, advertising, &c., say five hundred in all."

"Well, five hundred more gone, that leaves forty-five thousand five hundred."

"Quite correct, my dear sir, quite correct."

"And the mortgage is thirty-thousand, and the bank debt over three more, and the settlement money sixteen thousand; why, that makes a deficiency of three thousand five hundred."

Gosling had been following Seton's statement of figures with a pencil on his blotting pad; looking up he said—"Very correct indeed, ve-ry much so, my dear sir."

"Then, what are we to do?"

After considering the point for a few moments, Gosling suggested that the Sarncombe trustees should be paid, but not Wren's; there was no reason why he should not wait till the balance due from the Holborn Estate was paid off; by what had come out in Court that money was quite

safe, most likely Fermor would pay it off directly the suit was over, neither side could move in it till then; "we can't move before the Chancellor, you know, my dear sir, the principal guest goes first, doesn't he, ha ha."

"Perhaps it will be best to write to Mr. Wren and see if he is willing to wait."

"Pre-cisely, my dear sir, pre-cisely, if he will assent to that very reasonable arrangement we shall see our way quite clearly; the mortgage will be paid off, the bank debt, and the Sarncombe trustees; there will remain a very nice little balance of four thousand five hundred, a ve-ry nice little balance."

"Very little, certainly. I will write to Wren to-day. Then you advise me to take the forty-six thousand?"

"That is my advice, most decidedly; a bird in the hand, you know, my dear sir; there is nothing like a bird in the hand."

Rather pleased to find that by the means proposed, a deficiency of three thousand five hundred would be turned into a surplus of four thousand five hundred, Seton went home to write to Wren.

Mr. Gosling proceeded to note down the day and hour of our hero's last call, with the skeleton of their conversation, to be produced as an item in that bill which would mop up a considerable part of the ve-ry nice little balance :—

"To a long conversation with you when you consulted me as to the advisability of accepting certain terms for your Estate of Westerham. . .

"To a further conference on the same matter when you went into details as to figures and probabilities. . . . . .

"To a conference as to Mr. Wren taking over the security of the balance due from the Holborn Estates. . . . . .

"To consulting as to letter to ditto. . . .

"To advising acceptation of offer made for your estate. . . . . .

"To a discussion on general matters connected with the appeal to the Chancellor, and I advised you that we could not move as to the balance due from the Holborn Estates till the Chancellor had given his decision." . . . . . .

Mr. Gosling surveyed his notes, and smoothed his hands. "I really now am very much indebted to my old friend Garston, ve-ry much. Well,

well, he has played his little game, and found himself unable to shuffle his cards as well as some of us; well, well, shuffle and cut, they say—he has done it with a vengeance. Shuffle and cut, very good, ve-ry good, indeed—he has cut to another quarter of the globe I fancy, it is to be hoped he will play his cards better there than he did here, he never had a head or a temper; well, well, I really am very much obliged to him, ve-ry much." Here Mr. Gosling remembered one more item that he thought it was possible to add to Seton's bill of costs, so he entered it, and smiled benignantly.

* * * * * *

Wren replied to Seton that he would see his trustees about the matter, that he was very willing to do anything he could to assist him, but it must rest with them in a great measure. It ended by consent being given.

Then Westerham was sold.

Before it was absolutely gone, Seton paid one more visit to the home of his ancestors. It was miserable weather, the rain had already caused the river to burst its bounds, and the wintry meadows were in many places covered with pools

of water through the midst of which ran the brown stream. Here and there was a slight coating of ice, and flocks of wild ducks were swimming in the temporary lakes well out of reach of gun fire. The sheep were huddled together on the higher ground, and the cows were gathered into the farm yards. Half freezing, half dripping, the trees stood gaunt, the oaks still with their brown leaves clinging to them tightly, but the poplars, the ash, elm, and sycamore were all bare. In the hedges some few holly bushes and beech plants were all the vestiges of the foliage that had formed their summer beauty; here and there some hips or haws, not yet eaten, gave a point of colour.

Seton had walked from Chippington, as he wished to revisit his lost heritage without being noticed. He walked by the road as the meadows were too flooded, but he avoided the lodge gates and climbed a hedge, thus stealing into what was still his own for one brief week.

All was signed and sealed; in one more week the new possessor would be at liberty to enter; for six days more it was still his, then it would be gone for ever.

He did not enter the house, but he went on to the lawn, strolled round the shrubberies, and visited the mulberry tree round which there was a seat, and on the branches of which it had been such a pleasure to sit and eat the rich flavoured fruit; he remembered how there he had picked leaves for his silkworms warmed into life from seed, by being carried in his bosom; and he well recollected how, sitting in that tree, he had devoured the pages of the "Tower of London;" now the mulberry tree was cracked, the supporting props had fallen, and some of its branches were on the ground. He felt as if all alike was perishing; the paths were soddened, and the grass was growing through the gravel. The house looked like a huge tomb, and was as silent. No noise came from the stables, the familiar hissing and movement of horses feet was no more heard, only the drip drip of the trees.

The flower beds were deserts, the old yew looked more gloomy than ever, and the cedars wept silently, their tears falling on the unmown turf—stagnation was the ruling power. The gravel on the long terraces was soppy, and his feet left broad marks upon it. He went into the

conservatory, and there he found warmth indeed, but it was sickly and oppressive.

From there he passed through a door that led into a shed at the back; in this shed was the mouth of the fire that warmed the flues of the conservatory—crouching over this fire were two men, one an under gardener, who now had charge of all that was formerly ruled over by the Scotchman who had wounded Seton in our first chapter, the other was Job.

Both men started as though he was a ghost, and both seemed much relieved when they found out who it was. After a short interview, and a present to each from his slender purse, he passed out again into the dull day.

Job followed him, and when he had got to the deserted dog-kennels, he overtook him.

Seton was gazing through the bars, seeing in his memory the setters and the pointers that used to rush forward to meet him, the spaniels who formerly came clamouring from their inner house making the air ring with their barking; he did not notice Job's approach until he broke the silence by saying—

"I keept it all as clean and sprack-like as if

they was cummin back, it seemed like you might have comed any day—now they do tell I that you bent a coming back no more."

"It is quite true, Job, this is the last time I shall ever be here. I couldn't bear to see it in the hands of a stranger."

"Be it sold then?"

"Yes, it is sold."

"I heard talk on it, but I never could rightly make up my mind to it. Ain't there no chance of your being able to buy it back, zur?"

"No, none whatever I fear."

"Then dang'd ef I doant go too. Ef I may make so bold, Muster Zeaton, wur bist going?"

"I don't know yet, Job, I am going back to London at present."

"Could ee make a place vor me there, do ee think, zur?"

"No, I fear not, Job, I wish I could keep you, but I am very poor now. You must not depend on me any more, Job; I have the will to do things for the people down here, but I have no means."

"Well, zur, it ain't for the likes of me to understand the ins and outs of it, but I hope, zur,

ef it do take a turn you won't vorget I. Us, that's me and the missis, would go a hundred mile any day to bide along wi you."

"If ever I have a place in the country again, Job, depend upon it I will send for you; now I must say good-bye." And they shook hands.

Seton went round to the back of the kennels to see once more the place where old Nep used to live. Nep had been a huge retriever, his mother having been a Newfoundland and his father a setter. Nep had lived to a great age, taking after his father rather than his mother in that respect. How gladly Nep used to come out to the end of his chain when he had gone to take him for a walk; as he looked at the blank space, Seton could almost see him stretching and yawning, the yawn ending in a sort of laugh, as Nep showed all his teeth and shook himself in anticipation of his coming freedom. His collar undone, how he would bound away, take one wide circuit in the field, and then returning would take his place soberly at Seton's heels, never again to be tempted into even winking at a passing rabbit, though his ears would twitch.

Poor dear old Nep, how often he had sat motionless with his chin in Seton's lap, while his young master's thoughts were far away and his gun idle by his side, while he was sailing the seas with Cook, standing by the side of Columbus when he first caught sight of the new world, or making caves into huts with Robinson Crusoe; the last quite as real a man as either of the others. Poor dear old Nep, his loving heart was gone, his trustful eyes that used to look so solemnly into his, lived only in memory; his joyful voice was hushed for ever. Poor dear old Nep; ah, talk of friends . . . . where would he ever find another such as Nep, who now was lying close to the foot of the tree in which Seton had built the house mentioned at the opening of this tale.

The woods were miserable to behold, but still Seton kept on; he passed by the kitchen gardens, and went down the long paths that led to the lime-tree walk—he felt he must see that avenue once more. On one of those old trees, on a part invisible to those passing along the path, was cut the precious name of Gladys, and underneath his own. As he

looked on his handiwork, he reflected that this would be all that would remain to mark his rule at Westerham, and he took out his knife and cut the letters deeper.

Then his mission was over. Looking round he saw the water was over the bank, and the little harbour where the boats were kept, was not distinguishable from the river. The boats were hauled high up out of reach of the flood, and the smaller of the two, the one in which he had rowed Gladys and gone courting in to Maria Hustler, was rent and battered. The river was running very rapidly, whirling along torn branches on its surface. A water-hen flew across, and a flight of ducks passed overhead.

With a sigh he turned to leave these haunts for ever. Turning, he saw advancing up the lime-tree walk a muffled figure.

"Oh, my dear love, oh, Seton; I heard you were here, Job told me; I had come down to see the dear old place, and Job told me you were here, and gone towards the lime-tree walk. Seton dear, you never said you were coming."

For a minute the dull day was gone, the dripping trees were beautiful, the sun shone on

the water, and nature smiled as on those spring days when he and she had first wandered beneath those trees together.

Their greetings over, and explanations made, Gladys became alarmed at his worn look and hacking cough. He said what he could to comfort her, made light of his cough, which he attributed to the horrid weather recently set in. He told her that now the law suit would very soon be over and then . . . . "And then Gladys, my heart's treasure, I shall ask to have you for my own. Oh, my love, I will do all I can to make you happy. I have lost Westerham, but I have you. Dearest, I have been so sad to-day, but now it is all gone. I have lost Westerham, but if you do not regret it, I will not do so; we can be happy without riches. Darling, we love each other, we can live contented in our love."

Gladys said, "Dear Seton, do not regret Westerham more than you can help. God is very good to us—he has given us to each other."

Hand in hand, these two muffled figures passed up the avenue—they looked once again on the old house of Seton's fathers. They went together up the drive through the thick mists in which

the day was dying—they passed out of the lodge gates—then they separated—Gladys going forward to the "Quarries," and Seton back to London.

CHAPTER XV.

COSTS AND LIABILITIES.

THE purchase money was duly paid, and the Sarncombe trustees, the mortgage, and the bank debt settled. Another hundred and fifty was given to Gosling on account, and all was smooth.

At last the appeal really did come on. Unfortunately, as it seemed to Seton, Mr. Northam was engaged in another Court, and Hernshaw had to open the proceedings. The Court rose early, and at its next sitting Mr. Northam was in his place. He argued well and learnedly, indeed his arguments, in Seton's opinion, seemed unanswerable.

When he sat down, Hernshaw rose again, but the Chancellor declined to hear him a second time, and told Mr. Kerslaw that there was no necessity for his addressing the court, as, in his opinion, there was no ground whatever for the appeal; in fact he considered that the suit was improperly brought. Whoever had got up the

case had taken an entirely wrong course; if the defendant had acted as was suggested, the proceedings should have been of a different nature; if he had not so acted the suit should never have been brought at all. The appeal was dismissed with costs.

Instead of being relieved of the costs of the original suit, as he had been advised was sure to be the case, Seton now found himself cast in the costs of the appeal. Instead of his case being a good one, the Lord Chancellor declared it was wrongly brought from the very beginning. Seton thought of Sarncombe's advice, and wished he had taken it—"Do anything rather than go to law. Pitch it up, never fight a lawyer." His advice seemed to have been sounder than that of Garston, Gosling, Hernshaw, or even the great Northam.

All that now remained was to get in the bill, settle it, and in the future remember Sarncombe's advice.

Soon the bill did come in, and Seton opened his eyes very widely; but however wide he opened them there was margin enough of account to surround his most extended gaze.

Page upon page of items, such as those mentioned in the last chapter, were portions of this portentous bill; in it letters and conversations were referred to—conversations he had long forgotten—letters that used formerly to disturb his evenings—stamps and attendances and all the fifty items that go to swell such bills—all were fully represented.

Gosling blandly told him that he could have the bill taxed if he thought fit; but he could assure him the items were in strict conformity with the law—

"My dear sir, we endeavour to keep within bounds, we always use every exertion to maintain the confidence of our clients."

"But isn't it an enormous bill?"

"I should not say enormous; somewhat bulky, I should be inclined to think, is as far as we can reasonably go in describing it, and you see, my dear sir, Chancery proceedings will leave their records."

"Yes, so it seems; then just filing my bill has cost me nearly a thousand pounds, and I suppose the costs of the other side will be nearly as much more, in all some two thousand pounds."

"Yes, certainly, there will be the costs of the other side."

"Will they be as much as yours?"

"Well, Blyte is a very good man of business, ve-ry good. I should not be surprised if their bill exceeded mine—now I really should not. You see a firm like theirs has had exceptional opportunities of studying the making out of bills; humble practitioners like myself only follow in their footsteps as far as we can—as far as we can, my dear sir."

When the defendant's bill came in it turned out that Gosling had followed humbly in the footsteps of Wreckford and Blyte, to the tune of about one hundred and fifty only. Still this was enough to make Gosling moody.

"How the de-vil do they do it now," he said to himself, "I thought I had done this one pretty well too—well, well, a very clever firm indeed, ve-ry clever." And by studying their bill he picked up a few hints which he made use of in a little supplementary bill he sent in to Seton, for settling up a few personal trifles.

Just at this time, when Seton was engaged in examining these abominable bills, Hodges came

up to town to see him on a business matter. He was in a most anxious state of mind. It will be remembered that he, or rather his trustees, received Dora's eight thousand at an early stage of the winding up of the late Mr. Herold's estate. He and Garston were paid off at the same time.

Now, it had so happened that one of the original trustees to Dora's settlement had died; and Sarncombe was the other. A reappointment being necessary, Sarncombe took the opportunity of retiring, on the plea that he was liable to leave England at any time, and it would be better to have someone else; so Seton came in in his place, and Garston undertook to represent the Hodges' interest. At this time Garston and Hodges were excellent friends, and from the former's position as a brother-in-law and solicitor, he was a very suitable person if he would only undertake the responsibility; this he very good-naturedly did, so Dora's eight thousand was handed over to him and Seton.

The living at Slumpton was worth about two hundred and seventy pounds a year, Hodges had a trifle of his own bringing in about fifty more, and his wife's money at four per cent. would

make his income up to six hundred and forty; a very comfortable income for a clergyman in an out of the way place like Slumpton—a place where you could be as a chieftain for the mere distribution of garden stuff, skim milk, soup, flannel, and a little firing; supplemented by cheap port and pudding occasionally, with a dole of gin to such very old people as were bedridden or cramped with the rheumatics.

Hodges was rather popular in Slumpton, as he made a moderate outlay in these things, and also at the Rectory there was always a glass of beer for those who came to the house; this beer was not bad enough to be unacceptable by thirsty men, and it was quite as good as that at the public-house, so the reverend gentleman got credit for being liberal.

Whether he was so, does not concern this tale; but he certainly had no objection to receiving money, and when Garston showed him that three hundred and twenty pounds need not be the limit of his receipts from the eight thousand, he was very ready to listen to his suggestions. Garston propounded such sensible and enlightened views that Hodges thought he was very fortunate in

having such a trustee to look after his interests, and he readily gave his adhesion to a plan by which his income would be at once raised by some hundred and sixty pounds a year. Many a time had he and Dora smiled over their good fortune which, as Hodges put it, the Lord had sent them in that Garston had been placed in their path; he really believed that an especial blessing had been vouchsafed to him in the person of Garston.

The news of Garston's flight did not penetrate into the marshy neighbourhood of Slumpton for some time, and even when it did Hodges felt little alarm, he merely wrote to Seton asking him to see to his dividends, which would become due in another month. Seton replied that he knew nothing about the dividends. Then Hodges wrote again, and said he really must beg that Seton would bestir himself.

Seton did so far bestir himself that he went to Garston's bankers, but he could hear of no separate trustee account, there never had been one!

Hodges considered that Garston must have left the affair of the dividends in some other hands, and he would get them at the right time;

he was unaware that Garston's absence was to be perpetual; so things slumbered on.

October passed, and still he heard nothing. Then he began to get angry with Seton; Garston had always been most regular, now he was gone abroad why did not Seton for once take a little trouble?

Letters passed between them. Seton could say nothing as to Garston or the money as he knew nothing; Hodges kept on repeating that Seton was a trustee, and bound to know all about it.

At last Hodges came up to London to have it out with Seton. He did not for a moment imagine there was anything wrong with the principal, but he did think Seton must be made to look after the overdue interest. As long as things had gone straight, he had preferred that Seton should have nothing to do with the matter, except give his consent and signature when required; now it was quite another thing, he wanted his half-yearly two hundred and forty pounds, and Seton must find it. So up to town he came to worm it out of him.

The sitting-room in Winchcom Street was as gloomy as ever, quite as dingy, and Hann as

grubby. When Hodges rang and knocked, the maiden, after surveying him from the area, wiped her face on the jack towel, adjusted her hair by giving it a twitch up behind both ears, tied on the cleanest apron she could lay hands on, and then opened the front door.

"Is Mr. Herold at home?"

"Please walk in sir. Hany name?"

"If you will say Mr. Hodges—the reverend Mr. Hodges, my good girl."

Then the "reverend 'Odges" was sung out by Hann as Seton's door was opened wide, as though a stage prince was to enter. Hann had a considerable notion of fun, and Hodges' pomposity had tickled her.

"How d'ye do, Hodges, glad to see you."

"How do you do, Seton?"

"Just got up."

"Thanks to an over-ruling Providence, I have arrived in safety, though the roads were very bad."

Seton pulled his easiest chair to the fire and Hodges sat down. Hann was still in attendance, and this reminded Seton to send for some chops, as his brother-in-law was sure to be hungry.

The chops were procured, cooked and eaten, Hann standing solemnly by while Hodges said long graces before and after his repast. At the conclusion of the first she made offering of two pieces of bread on a plate, at the end of the second she removed the grease and bones, swept the crumbs into the used plates with her apron, and retiring down stairs, gave a faithful imitation of what she had seen and heard to her mistress and master, who were having their bit of dinner in the kitchen. Her master was so tickled at the performance that he nearly choked, and had to be slapped violently on the back by his better half; as a fact, Hann's exhibition was very good: with a glass cloth for a white tie, and a sanctimonious upturning of her eyes, she made an excellent caricature of Hodges.

While this merriment was going on in the kitchen, war began to rage in the parlour. Filled with Seton's chops and warmed with his family sherry at two and nine, from the publican's, Hodges became disagreeable. From talking the matter over calmly, and trying to arrange the best course to take in order to find out when, where, and how he was to get his interest, he got

to finding fault with Seton, then to threatening him with his brother James, the lawyer.

Seton was very meek, his only wish was to get rid of his visitor. He knew nothing about the matter, Hodges and Garston had arranged it all. When he had demurred to the security, they had both laughed at him and assured him that all he had to do was to sign his name, nothing more would ever be required of him; they would undertake the whole responsibility. Dora, too, had reminded him that it was her money, not his, and they all wished it put out at a higher rate of interest; "You may not want money, but we do, I can assure you," she had said. And Hodges had added, "because the Lord has been so good to you, that is no reason why your poorer brother should not have his substance increased." Believing that he was merely as a sort of fifth wheel to a coach, Seton had done that which had been required of him; now he repented having done so.

Hodges was sitting opposite to him drinking his wine and abusing him. Feeling he had been a fool, he submitted to the abuse for a time, turning over in his mind how best to get rid of him. It had not occurred to him any more than it had

to Hodges that the principal might have vanished. He thought in the hurry of running away—for he had now found out that Garston had levanted—he had, most likely, not bothered himself about Hodges' affairs, and the dividend was lying somewhere unclaimed.

Seeing no other way of getting rid of Hodges, Seton suggested that they should go and see Gosling, and consult him. His brother-in-law snapped at this, drank one more glass of the family sherry, and then they started in a cab for Gosling's offices.

Hann, who had called the cab, and noted Hodges' red face and flustered manner when he gave her a sort of parting benediction as she held the cab door open for them to get in, had another innings; with one of Seton's hats on, she gave a rendering of the reverend gent to an audience consisting of the third-floor-back, a medical student, and a friend or two who had happened in. They were much pleased, as was also the young postman, who was favoured with a rapid sketch of the more salient points of Hodges' manner at a later hour.

Shewn into the presence of Mr. Gosling,

Seton introduced his brother-in-law, and stated the reason of their visit.

"It's a very delicate question, a ve-ry delicate question, indeed, my dear sir. The first thing is to find out where the principal is invested."

Hodges made a rambling sort of statement to the effect that Garston had put a portion of it into the Compressed Rails and Continuous Sleepers Company, another portion into an excellent mine, called the Great Wheel, there were also, he believed, shares in London and the Marshes Railway, and many other securities, the names of which he did not just then recollect.

"Are such investments permitted by the trust deed?"

"I believe not, but Garston said that trustees, with the sanction of the principals, could do what they liked, and we were all agreed."

"You can hardly say that," put in Seton, "for I objected very strongly at one time."

Hodges turning on him, said—

"You gave your consent."

"Yes, under pressure from all of you, including Dora, I did at last."

"Do you mean, my dear sir, that Mr.

Garston eventually had the sole charge of these moneys?"

"Yes, I signed some things at his and Hodges' request, and he undertook to see to the dividends and all that sort of thing."

"But," and this time Gosling addressed himself to Hodges, "do I rightly understand you that these moneys were all placed in such securities as you have mentioned?"

"Those were some, but there were several others, Garston always said, 'don't put your eggs all in one basket, divide your money into portions, and distribute it over several securities, then you are sure to be safe; if one does go wrong the others will repay the loss.'"

"Ah, I see, divide and conquer; very good indeed, very good adage, very good indeed. And how did you arrange about the interest."

"He always paid me."

"Paid you what, my dear sir?"

"Paid me six per cent.; he said, it would be best to give me this amount regularly, and let the remainder accumulate to form a reserve fund, by means of which my position would be doubly secure. The advice seemed very sound, and I

must say till now he paid me the interest most punctually."

"Do you know where the reserve fund is?"

"No, of course I had nothing to do with it."

"I suppose not, my dear sir; and you are equally ignorant of where the different securities themselves are, 'eggs,' I think you said, Garston termed them?"

"He managed everything."

"Then you have nothing whatever to show for the eight thousand pounds?"

"I think I have a list somewhere of the things Garston put the money into."

"And, Mr. Herold, you have been to Garston's bank, and can hear nothing?"

"Nothing; there never was a separate account, it seems."

"Well, well, and you signed away the eight thousand to Garston?"

"I signed what Hodges, and he and my sister all wished me to sign."

"Dear, dear me, well, well; and you, my dear sir, were desirous of, and pressed for this arrangement?"

"Certainly, with our small income, and as

Providence thought fit to bless us with offspring, we did what we deemed wisest and best to provide for their future, by increasing our little store, so as to provide for the future that must surely come."

"I really—now, really—I do fear these investments were most unwise."

"Do you mean that we shall experience a difficulty in getting our interest?"

"Both interest and principal, my dear sir; I fear—I really do fear—that trusting to Garston was an unwise thing, virtually it was not following his advice about not putting all your eggs in one basket."

"Surely the principal is not endangered?"

"That I fear is not the precise term to use, my dear sir, the precise word I fear is . . . . lost!"

"Lost! the principal lost! impossible."

"Do not excite yourself, my dear sir, there may be some hope, though I cannot myself feel any. You know Garston can never re-appear amongst us again, and I fear, I really do fear, that in all probability with his disappearance this money is gone also."

"I will go and consult my brother James, there must be some means of saving the fortunes of my little ones." With this Hodges flung out of the room, and he returned to Slumpton that very evening in spite of his fatigue.

Seton remained to hear more from Gosling as to his position in the matter.

It seemed that his position was a most unpleasant one: he had rendered himself liable for the whole amount of the trust money, and there could scarcely be a doubt that the whole eight thousand was gone.

"They all begged me to do it," Seton urged.

"But it was not their money, it was trust money."

"It was Dora's money."

"No, it was a trust, not only for her, but for her children."

"What am I to do?"

"You had better do nothing, my dear sir, something may turn up yet about it; in any case it is not for you to move in the matter. We must see what course Mr. Hodges will take."

"My affairs seem to go from bad to worse: if I have to pay this I shall be nearly penniless."

"It is a long lane that has no turning, my dear sir; even Chancery Lane comes to an end, as we say in the profession."

"And makes an end of our pockets too; at least it has made a pretty hole in mine."

"Very good indeed, my dear sir, so long as you can keep up your spirits and make your joke, money matters but little. Money, my dear sir, is by no means everything."

"Lucky for me, for it seems I shall soon be without any." Seton left Mr. Gosling, who noted that his late visitor had got nearly to the end of his tether. He was quite mournful as he entered this interview in his pocket book, and reflected that Seton's cash balance would conveniently afford very few more such items.

"Well, well, what an idiot he has been to be sure, dear, dear me!"

CHAPTER XVI.

SORROW AND SICKNESS.

"KEEP up his spirits!"—very good advice but hard indeed to follow. To keep up your spirits in Winchcom Street with the feeling on you that everything you have done in life has been a miserable failure, that you have lost your health, strength and property, that you have no way out of the meshes of the net destiny has entangled you in, and seems strangling you with, is very difficult. To keep up your spirits in Winchcom Street without these other concomitants is difficult enough to a man accustomed to spacious rooms, handsome surroundings, plenty of air and unlimited cleanliness. None of these things were to be had in Winchcom Street—there was no space, no beauty, no ventilation, no cleanliness—all was close, ugly, stuffy, and grimy.

When you have fought your battle and lost it—when you have done all you could to encounter fortune with a bold front, but have been defeated

all along the line—when you have seen your fortune disappear, turn into leaves like fairy money—when you have lost the heritage of your forefathers—when you have just heard that the remnant of property you had reckoned on for a bare subsistence is liable to be engulphed, that the little sum you had hoped might suffice for your modest wants may be taken from you owing to your ignorance of legal matters and your unwillingness to be disagreeable to your sister—when affairs are such as these, it is not an easy matter to keep up your spirits.

Poor Seton had none to keep up, his buoyancy was gone, his genial smile had ceased to send a play of light over the whole face, his cheeks were sunken, and the bones but too apparent, his hands were lean and his body wasted. Day after day he sat crouching over the fire in that wretched room, trying to read, but only thinking; night after night he lay in the stuffy bedroom trying to sleep, but only wandering in thought over his lost time and luckless state. How different it would all have been if he had had a profession, then there would have been something to turn to, something over which he would

have had control, something that would have taken him from himself. By hard work he would have gained at any rate a subsistence for himself, and possibly enough to provide for Gladys.

As he thought of her, light and life would flicker up within him, and he would recall the touch of her sweet lips, the heaven of her eyes, the music of her voice, and the radiance of her presence.

Then the grim fact of his surroundings would come back to him, and he would shudder as with a sudden chill.

Poor fellow, he would clench his thin fingers, and beat his hand upon the table, feeling how powerless he was, how helpless to go out and fight the world—"I am but a useless log" he would cry.

* * * * * *

One day a thick packet was brought in to him by Hann, who, to do her justice, felt much for the "Parlors," as she called him. "He do seem so lonesome," she told the postman, "I 'ope this will cheer 'im hup a bit, it aint good for no one to be so mopy."

Taking off the outer cover of the packet,

Seton found within an inner packet directed to himself, in Ralph's handwriting, also a letter with a broad black edge. This last was from Emily Lacy, and contained the following:—

"FLORENCE.

"DEAR MR. HEROLD,—

"I have to break to you the sad news of poor Ralph's death. He charged me to send you the enclosed packet, and with his last breath he spoke of you. We had known for some time he could not recover, but we had hoped that with great care he might be spared to us a little longer; it was however, not to be so; he passed away from us last Thursday week, and was buried in the Protestant Cemetery at this place. For some months he was aware that his life hung on a thread, and he was quite prepared for the end. We wintered at Alassio, as Ralph had taken a great fancy to the place when we passed through it before, and we were fortunately able to hire a charming little house in an orange-grove. Poor Ralph enjoyed sitting out in the shade, listening to the peasants singing, and, when able to get so far, he would sit for hours on the headland

over the bay, called the Capo delle Croce. I will not dwell on these things at present, they are still too recent, and I believe the enclosed packet contains dear Ralph's thoughts and feelings when at Alassio. He kept up wonderfully, and was so calm and sweet-tempered; although at times he must have suffered much, even his old fun and spirits would come back to him occasionally, but more often he would sit as though lost in thought. Sometimes he would write, but we feared to let him write too much, as a stooping attitude was so bad for him. Trusting that we may some day meet in England,

"I remain, dear Mr. Herold,

"Very sincerely yours,

"EMILY LACY."

* * * * * *

This was the letter that was to cheer him up a bit! Inside the enclosed packet were several pieces of poetry, and just these few lines from Ralph :—

"ALASSIO.

"DEAR OLD HEROLD,—

"I fear I have been a lazy writer of letters, and I don't know that I have been

very industrious about anything. My life seems to pass away in planning things for the future, rather than in performing in the present. I so often think of the days we were together at Pau, and how good you were to me then. Latterly I have been, as I then was, but a poor creature, and unable to do more than crawl into the sun, and listen to the life around me. All on this shore of the lovely Riviéra is very beautiful, but very sad; even the songs of the fishermen and lemon-gatherers seem full of a latent melancholy—or, it may be, that I so translate them; the sun always shines by day, and the nights are very glorious, but there is a monotony of blue sea and sandy beach, a solemnity of olive woods, that tinges everything. All is very beautiful; the sunrises—and especially the sun-sets—are glorious beyond description; the sky is so pure and so brilliant in its tones; yet the stillness, broken only by some chapel bell or cry of sea-bird—by a rustling of the trees as the deep green olive reveals its shining silver underleaf, or by the beating of the waves upon the shore, is almost heart-breaking. You seem to hear things beyond all human ken: from the stillness voices

seem to come—solemn voices—that, without sound, whisper to the heart words of unspeakable mystery.

"Dear old Herold, you, and you alone, of all men, know my secret aspirations; even Emily does not understand me as you did; to you I have left all there will soon be remaining of me. I have dreamt of fame, but I shall die unknown. I have longed for what the world calls immortality; but I shall know no immortality other than that which I sometimes see opening out before me as I sit at evening on the hill top. I have almost ceased to care about the things of this world—almost, but not quite. I know that I shall not much longer be permitted to look on the glories of earth, but I hope—I hope I may see those more glorious things of which we can know nothing—can hardly conceive even of a threshold of a knowledge—which revealed is only fit for such as have left behind them all dross and soil of earth.

"I can only write that I have almost ceased to care about the things of this world; I cannot in my heart repeat it, and how can it be otherwise?—the world is so beautiful, we cannot

help loving it, nature is so good and glorious we cannot but sympathize with it; when sympathy is gone, then I believe life may become a burthen rather than a blessing; but till then, we cannot cease to care about the things of this world.

"Dear old friend—I write about myself, as I know *you* will bear with me; I write from my innermost feelings, and, writing thus, it is a satisfaction to me to think that, in after years, there will be one who knew me—one who will remember that the would-be poet died happy, and in accord with all God's gifts, and all God's creatures. I no longer hope, or even wish for a reputation with the world at large, but I do hope and pray for the remembrance and appreciation of one true friend.

"Among the little lays and scraps I send you, is one I have called 'Marina,' written at this place. One day, while we were here, an accident such as I have alluded to took place; one of those sudden squalls, so frequent in the Mediterranean, came on, and passed over the little fleet that harbours here; all reached the land in safety but one—that one, hardly missed at the moment, was never heard of again.

"Dear old Herold—when these lines reach you, I shall have passed away—I shall have sailed off into the eternal space that only walls in such as have not eyes of faith to pierce beyond the vault that knows no boundary. That God may bless you, dear old fellow, is the earnest prayer of your friend,

"RALPH LACY."

* * * * * *

Tears fell from Seton's eyes as he read his dead friend's letter. What had he to live for except Gladys?—and she was unattainable on account of his poverty. He laid down the letter very gently, and carefully collected the enclosures.

* * * * * *

Next day his thoughts were turned into a fresh channel by a letter from Gladys. It was written in terror and dismay. They had that day heard the "Irresolute," in which ship Guss was a lieutenant, was lost. The news had been sent down to them by a friend of Guss, who was a clerk at the Admiralty; he had written in anticipation of the public announcement. He gave some hopes, as it was known that at least

one boat had escaped, and more might have done so. The "Irresolute," which had been sent to the Pacific Station, had been lost on a coral reef; the wreck had taken place at night, and the vessel had sunk in a very short time; there would be further news soon.

Gladys wrote to tell Seton to find out all he could at the Admiralty or elsewhere.

For several days our hero went to and fro, gathering every scrap of intelligence he could, real or imaginary; every afternoon he transmitted such of these as seemed worth sending. Now a report would obtain that all but this one boat, which contained eleven men, were lost; then it was said that for certain a quarter boat had got away. News of men picked up, and of signals seen on barren islands, floated about, but nothing tangible could be ascertained.

Worn out, and almost collapsed with a fresh cold caught in this service—eaten up with a new anxiety—Seton at last fairly succumbed, and was ordered to bed by the doctor he called in when he found he could not do without one.

In bed at Winchcom Street, on the hard mattress, and surrounded by the stuffy curtains of

the old four-post bedstead, lay Seton, delirious, trying to follow the ramifications of the scroll-patterned wall paper, till he fell asleep—this was no refreshing sleep, but a feverish, dreamful sleep, in which he still tracked scrolls through all time and space.

Hann and her mistress were as attentive as their other duties would permit; but at last, the doctor, finding Seton was growing worse, said he must have a nurse. A hired nurse was, therefore, called in, and Seton, in his waking dreams, was aware of a strange face that roused him roughly to take draughts, and a strange form that shuffled and creaked about, or slept calmly in a nursing chair.

After some days of this, he became dimly conscious that this face and figure had somehow changed into one he had known in some former life. Gentle hands now smoothed his pillows, the heavy curtains were thrown back, the room had become fresher, there was no more creaking or shuffling; watchful eyes that seemed to read and understand his unspoken wishes were always near; there was now no slumberer in the nursing chair, but a figure ever alert, and ready to

administer to his wants. Who was this new nurse, and how came it about that she was there?

* * * * * *

Gladys wondered very much at Seton's silence, the only thing she could think of was that he was gone somewhere to get information about Guss.

CHAPTER XVII.

SETON RETURNS TO HIS OLD QUARTERS.

It will be remembered that when Seton left Remington Place, and took refuge in Winchcom Street, his move was a very short one. Thus it fell out that Mrs. Filters had never lost sight of his whereabouts, and she had never entirely lost hope that he might yet turn into a son-in-law. There had been, in the whole affair, a something that she could not understand; there must, she thought, have been some quarrel. Emma never would say anything on the subject, and she held her mother to her promise not to talk about it. This was very burdensome to Mrs. Filters, as she wished to unload, by discussion, the weight she carried in her mind. Emma would have no discussion at all.

Mrs. Filters would look round on all the glories of her drawing-room, dimly seen through the gauze and holland, she would look in the pier glass and the plates that adorned the chiffonier,

she would survey the very tables and the chairs, examine the stag upon the hearthrug, and the pictures on the walls—all these were very excellent, but still they seemed incomplete without Seton. The drawing-room was perfect, but it was a desert; the furniture was all that heart of woman could wish, but where was the occupant who had become a very part and parcel of these excellencies?

"Lor, how 'appy they might have been; what junketings we would have 'ad—him, and me, and Emma. I'm sure I never would have grudged them anything money could have got them. To think of his being in that fusty Winchcom Street; why the postman says there is only one maid to do all the work, and the house is quite full."

And the good lady would get quite unhappy over the new surroundings of her late lodger. "Such a clean young man, too, he was—his bath regular every morning, and his skin like milk of roses; no wonder Emma frets after him; let alone his being a real gentleman, he is as good a picture of a 'usband as one would wish for. Lor,' dear me, whatever can they have nagged at; I don't believe about there being another—it don't stand to reason; if there is, why don't he

be with her more? There can't be any good in his being up in London always; he don't enjoy himself, or do any good here; if there was another, she would look after him a bit."

So Mrs. Filters put on one side the figment, as she regarded it, of there being another; "Lor,' they had just quarrelled, that was about the size of it."

Emma had no such hope; she knew too well that all was over between her and Seton; in the future he would be only a shadow in her memory, but at present he was a very living occupant of her heart—she had so thoroughly made up her mind that he wanted her, and she knew so surely that she wished for him—had set her whole heart on him.

Poor girl, she had honestly and truly loved him; she may have, in the first instance, been somewhat attracted to him by his higher status, but it was not that which had conquered her: it was his pleasant manner, his amiable disposition, a something infinitely attractive to her in his serious grey eyes and his winning smile—why these things had conquered her she could not tell, but it was a very serious fact that such was the case.

Now she knew that whatever his attractions were, they were not for her; his words and manner had for ever banished such illusions. Time would heal her wound, she hoped, and make that very real pain into a shadow of things passed away.

The postman who left letters in Winchcom Street as well as in Remington Place, finding news of Seton acceptable to Mrs. Filters, and productive of occasional shillings, was very ready to carry such intelligence of our hero as he thought worthy of being mentioned to Remington Place, and from his intimacy with Hann, his opportunities for gathering such information were great. Thus it came to the ears of Mrs. Filters that Seton was lying very ill, if not dying, only cared for by a hired nurse.

"Emma," said the mother to her daughter, "I've heard such a thing—young Herold is left alone with a nurse, and may die any day; what can his friends be thinking of?"

Emma turned quite white.

"Mother, why did you speak so sudden."

"Lor' a mercy on us, Emma, don't look at me like that child, he aint so bad as all that."

"Then, why did you say such a thing?"

"Lor' my dear, I did speak, so to say, foolish, but there, never mind."

"But I do mind, mother—I wish I didn't—tell me all you know about him."

All Mrs. Filters did know for certain was that Seton was in bed, with the doctor attending him, and a nurse had been hired to watch him.

"Who is the doctor?"

"I never asked, but the postman is sure to know, we can ask him next round."

When the postman did come again, he was able to say that Mr. Maler, the gent who lived round the corner, was the doctor in attendance on Seton, and he could not restrain a most untimely grin as he said it. The fact was, Hann had favoured him with a correct representation of the doctor's stereotyped manner when he addressed her on his daily visits, with a—"How are we going on to-day?—a little less restless, I hope."

This news was very satisfactory, as Mr. Maler was their medical attendant, also he and his wife were occasionally guests of Mrs. Filters, so there would be no difficulty in finding out all about Seton through him. An invitation to tea was at once sent to the Malers, who knowing that tea at Mrs. Filters' included supper, at

which much that was delicate as well as what was substantial, was sure to appear, gladly accepted the invitation. Being professional the Malers looked down on Mrs. Filters; but the latter was rich, had a good house, and was to a certain extent influential in the neighbourhood, so such sociability as Mrs. Filters offered was readily accepted by Mrs. Maler, who loved a good dish of chat, and knew that her hostess would be well up in the affairs of the district.

Emma had formed a plan of getting permission from Mr. Maler to act as nurse to the sick man; her mother's idea was to get Seton back to her drawing-room floor; she felt sorry that she had ever driven him forth, poor lamb; he was no longer an ill-behaved wolf in her estimation, but a poor suffering lamb. The matter was debated to and fro, but no conclusion could be arrived at, till the Malers had "tea'd" with them.

When, in the course of the evening on which the Malers were their guests, the conversation was turned on Seton, the doctor shook his head gravely concerning him, and said it was a very sad affair. Mrs. Filters remarked, "We liked

him so much, and were quite sorry when he went away from here, only I didn't care to go on letting the rooms; but if I'd thought he would have gone to such a place as Winchcom Street, I'm sure I should have thought twice before I let him go. Couldn't we move him back again doctor? I am sure he is welcome to the rooms for nothing."

"That is very kind of you, Mrs. Filters, but I fear he could not bear the removal at present."

"Is he one of the Avonshire Heralds?" enquired Mrs. Maler, who was very genteel, knew something of county families, and had a smattering of the peerage.

"He comes from that part, and has his relations there and his property."

"Ah, I know; I forget the name of it, it was sold the other day,"

"Dear me, was it indeed. That is all along of his law suit which he lost; I saw in the paper it was given against him."

"Very likely that is what is preying on his mind," said the doctor; "his illness is as much mind as body, a good deal of fever and delirium, poor young fellow; hasn't he any brothers or sisters to look after him? Why, Miss Emma

you shouldn't have let such a nice young bachelor run away from Remington Place."

"Don't be so foolish, Mr. Maler," said his wife; and Emma, with a burning blush, let out her secret to the astute doctor, who had rather suspected there was something between her and his patient—he and his wife had both thought that sudden quitting of Remington Place very strange.

Mrs. Maler, on the road home, gave her husband great credit for his shrewdness, and felt the evening had been by no means lost.

"She is a fine girl, not that I particularly admire such very dark eyes; don't you think she is very much gone off lately, William?"

Now Mrs. Maler was a little round blonde of some twenty-eight summers.

William very naturally replied, "that he thought she was looking a little 'peeky', but he had not particularly noticed her that evening; you know, my dear, she is not my style." This with a little squeeze into his side of the hand resting on his arm.

"What I imagine is," continued the lady, "she tried for him, and he didn't see it; not likely he would, the Herolds are a very good

family, quite good county people. I know it tells about them in the landed gentry; I'll look them out when we get in."

"I daresay you are right my dear, and that would quite account for his going off so suddenly. I fancy he is pretty poor though, or he would not have gone to a hole like Winchcom Street."

Here they arrived at their own house; the doctor went off to see a patient, and his wife looked up her landed gentry.

To Mrs. Filters and Emma it had been made pretty plain that for the present Seton could not be moved. Emma, therefore, reverted to her plan of going to nurse him in Winchcom Street, and, after a struggle with her mother, she obtained permission. "He might die while we are waiting for him to get better," she had urged. And Mrs. Filters, though disliking the plan, and fearful of Emma's getting talked about, yet saw no other way of managing—and after all it would be the best way of getting Seton for her. "When you are weak and down, the heart comes out," she thought; "even if there has been another, when he finds Emma nursing him, and the other neglecting him, he will surely turn to her; lor' there, after all, we are old friends, and what

if they do talk a bit, words dont break bones, but they had better not let me hear them." All things considered she consented.

Emma had no hope in her heart, but she had much love, so she cared nothing what anyone might say; provided she could be of use to Seton, she would let their tongues wag, wag they ever so.

In furtherance of this project, Mr. Maler was invited to look in, as Mrs. Filters felt there was something out of order in her inside. The doctor had noticed that she had eaten rather freely of trifle, prawns and game pie the night before, so he was not surprised at being called in, and suspected nothing, till it was fairly put to him—"Would it not be better for Seton to be nursed by me and Emma, instead of by a hired nurse, such as is now attending him? We were very fond of him, he seemed quite like a son to me; lor,' he used to sit just where you are now doctor and tell us all about his law, and things. I was always afraid it would bring him to misfortune, nothing but trouble ever does come of law."

Mr. Maler being a good-natured man, and also thinking such nursing would be the best thing

possible for his patient, promised to arrange things as Mrs. Filters wished, and went home and told his wife, who now made sure she had been right.

"But it is a great chance if he gets through," said the doctor.

"Do you really mean that he is not likely to recover?"

"I think it is very uncertain."

"Then I think it is quite right and proper that Mrs. Filters and her daughter should see to him, as they knew him so well; but if he is so bad as all that, why don't his relations go to him? there must be some who could come up—hadn't you better find out, and write to his friends?"

"I did long ago, my dear; I found a letter on his table from a Mr. Hodges, a clergyman, who in it mentioned his wife as being young Herold's sister. It was a business letter, and lying open, so I read it, and wrote to the writer, who lives down in Essex."

"And what was the result?"

"Oh, he wrote to say that if it was absolutely necessary he would come up, but his wife was expecting to be confined daily, and he also had much to do with the people committed to his

charge, or some bosh of that sort; clearly he did not mean coming if he could help it, so the thing ran on. We'll see what our new nurses do before we write to any one else."

It was therefore Emma, whose hands were cool and pleasant to him, whose face came to him as in a dream, and whose form was ever present in his sick chamber, that Seton was aware of as ministering to him. Nominally, Mrs. Filters assisted, but Emma was greedy of watching over him, and her mother's share was principally confined to providing clean linen, luxuries of hot-house fruit, and such other delicacies as the doctor thought might suit his patient.

This care, and the excellent nourishment did much for Seton; he began to revive, and before long the doctor permitted him to be removed to Remington Place, where he was installed in his old chamber.

Whether it was that he had been moved too soon—whether he had in the moving taken fresh cold, or whether it was that the fever had only left him for a while, the doctor could not tell—but no sooner was he laid in his old bed at Mrs. Filters', than he underwent a sudden relapse. He became so very much worse that his friends were

again written to; this time it was Mr. Wren who was communicated with.

Elinor at once set off to see to her brother, feeling much disgusted at hearing that Seton had returned to the house occupied by those people of whom Garston had spread such shocking reports—reports she had quite believed in.

Necessity compelled her to enter the house, but she felt as if there was pollution in the very staircase, and shame hidden under the holland and gauze of the drawing-room.

She saw at once that Seton was thoughtfully cared for, but this was part of their plot, and no doubt they expected to be very handsomely paid for it in money, if they could not secure him for that bold-eyed girl. It was thus she thought of poor Emma, who was wearing herself away in the service of the sick man, who hoped for no reward, only prayed that he might recover.

Elinor had an interview with the doctor, and found from him that Seton's life hung on a thread; he could not say, it was a very intricate case, he was very glad she had come. The Filters' had nursed him well, and done everything that could be done for him, but still he was very glad his sister had come; it was a great

responsibility. "Would Mrs. Wren like to call in any one to consult?"

Elinor thought it would be best, and one of the great men of the day was sent for. He confirmed Mr. Maler's view of the case, and said "it could not be left in better hands; all was being done that could be done. We must leave it to nature; he is young, and nature will do more for him than anything we doctors can do my dear madam; we can only watch and wait."

After the doctors were gone, Elinor rang the bell, and asked to see Mrs. Filters; as yet she had only seen her in the presence of others. Mrs. Filters had sent up some luncheon, and Elinor had eaten it mechanically, and drank a glass or two of wine, little suspecting that she was indebted to Mrs. Filters' hospitality for that refreshment; she thought of her simply as a lodging-house woman, and as of one who had permitted rioting, if not absolute wantonness to go on between Seton and her daughter.

Mrs. Filters entered in her best cap and her best company look; she felt full of politeness, and sailed in overflowing with hospitable feelings to Seton's sister.

Elinor was seated by the centre table, and was

much surprised when Mrs. Filters, after bowing to her, sat down on the sofa, and 'oped she found the chicken to her liking. Unaccustomed to the manners and habits of lodging-house keepers, and not wishing to have any discussion on such a point, Mrs. Wren passed over what she thought was this landlady's impertinence, dismissed the matter of the fowl with a "yes, thank you, it was very nice," and proceeded to talk business.

"I have sent for you to inquire if I can have a bedroom here for a night or two, till I see what turn my poor brother's illness will take."

Mrs. Filters thought this rather an ungracious way to speak to her, but made allowance for Mrs. Wren's feelings being upset at finding her brother so ill; therefore she said very graciously that Mrs. Wren was welcome to remain in her house as long as she found it convenient.

"That is settled then; now, if you please, let me see my room, and I will have my things brought from the hotel. I suppose my maid can have a room somewhere?"

Mrs. Filters said she could accommodate the maid; "not that I like strange maids, but to oblige you, Mrs. Wren, I don't mind putting myself about."

"With regard to meals, I suppose you can supply them?"

"If you prefer eating alone, mam, you can do so; you may not find our hours suit, we are plain people, and dine early."

"I don't quite understand. I don't mind dining early if it is any convenience—any time will do."

"Not at all, mam, only Emma and me would be very 'appy of your company if it suited, that is all."

"Do you mean that you would like me to dine with you? What can you be thinking of? Now, my good woman, let us come to an understanding at once. I am very much obliged to you for taking so much care as you have done of my brother, but I really must also tell you that the accounts we have heard concerning you are none of the best, and—in short, owing to circumstances, I am willing to take your rooms, but you must clearly understand there is to be no sort of intimacy between us. What my misguided brother may have done I know not, nor do I wish to enter on such a topic with you; was it not for Mr. Herold's illness, I should not

dream of remaining a single day in your lodgings, or, if I could help it, allowing him to do so. While I think of it, will you please to let me have your bill up to the present time, as I presume my poor brother has not been able to attend to money matters."

While Elinor was speaking, Mrs. Filters sat staring at her, almost believing she was gone mad. Sitting there on her own yellow satin sofa, with her own furniture around her; the lady she had regarded as a distinguished visitor, and regaled accordingly with chicken and her best dessert sherry, was sitting over against her with her elbow resting on her splendid centre table; could such words be possible! There was her visitor, surrounded by and comforted with her luxuries, positively using language to her such as had never before fallen to her lot—"the accounts concerning her were none of the best—her misguided brother, indeed—and her bill—surely Mrs. Wren must be bereft of reason!"

Mrs. Filters rose from her seat, and with withering scorn, addressed this interloper, for whom she had been ready to sacrifice her comfort, even to the entertaining of her maid. Rising to all the height of which she was capable, she said,

"Madam, as this 'appens to be my 'ouse, and as I do not let lodgings, only once to oblige, it is not likely that I shall sit in my own drawing-room to listen to such talk as you have demeaned yourself with. Whatever you mean I do not know. Your brother was very ill, and we have nursed him, me and my daughter; he has been here not as a lodger, mam, but as a guest, mam—there is no bill. I may not be a great lady, mam, but I am as hindependent as any lady in the land. 'Good woman' indeed, if that is the way you speak to one whose 'eart was full of kindness to the young man now lying in my best bedroom, the sooner you leave my house the better, mam. I don't let lodgings, I was glad to accommodate and to entertain Mr. Herold's sister, but . . . . . that is all, mam."

Having come to this somewhat abrupt conclusion, thereby smothering down much stronger words that kept rising to her lips, Mrs. Filters moved towards the door.

Elinor, feeling she had made a mess of it, began—

"Excuse me, Mrs. Filters, but I fear I have been led into a mistake as to your position, I really beg your pardon."

"By no means, madam, the things you have said are such as I never heard before; mistakes as to lodgings I wouldn't say was unnatural, but the *hother* things . . . . No madam, you are welcome to come and go as long as your brother lies there a sick and dying, but I cannot accommodate you further. I wonder you had the 'eart to come here and say what you did, when me and my daughter have been nursing him night and day." So saying, Mrs. Filters left the room in tearful dignity.

Elinor was mistress of the field, but she was utterly worsted in the battle; she had raised the storm and now she must reap the consequences; she must go back to the Piccadilly Hotel, where she had slept last night, and where she had left her maid and her baggage, instead of remaining under the same roof with her brother.

A day or two passed, and Seton being no better Elinor thought Gladys ought to be told how matters stood. She knew the grief Mrs. Tarleton was in, so she wrote to Gladys herself, and said that she could, if she wished it, come to her at the hotel.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EMMA BEHAVES WELL.

GRIEF was indeed overpowering Mrs. Tarleton; dismay and dread were at the "Quarries." Hope would enter for a moment, but fear soon ousted it. There was no manner of doubt that the "Irresolute" was lost—wrecked on a coral reef of the Pacific; that much was quite clear. One boat containing eleven men had been picked up, and the men were now in England; these imagined that others had also got away from the wreck; indeed, one of them, a petty officer, and the leading man of the eleven, was sure that another boat had got away, but more than that he could not tell, all had been the work of a very few minutes. The vessel had struck soon after the second dog-watch, struck very heavily; the night was cloudy, and the sea high; there was a moon, but it was constantly obscured by clouds. The captain was on the bridge giving orders, and one boat was swamped in launching; that in which these eleven got away was very nearly

upset also, as it hung in the falls ; luckily one of the men cut the rope at once, or they also would have been swamped ; as it was some of the oars got lost, and they were, in consequence, unable to keep near the ship, but were driven off to sea. They drifted about for four days before they were picked up, suffering intensely for want of water: they had a little biscuit with them, and they managed to catch just enough water to keep them alive as a heavy shower fell. The vessel that picked them up was an American whaler with full cargo and anxious to get home, so no search was made; indeed the shipwrecked sailors had quite lost their reckoning, so could not tell in which direction it was worth while to search.

One of the men said that Lieut. Tarleton had been very active in lowering the boats, but whether he had gone in one or not he could not tell.

This was all the information that could be gathered, and Mrs. Tarleton was quite broken down with her trouble. It was the first great sorrow that had ever come to her; her parents had died, but only when well ripe with years; her husband had been taken from her, but he was the husband of her second summer, one she

had married she hardly knew why, only he wanted her, and she had gone to him, but she had not loved him as those do who give not only their first summer to their husbands, but all their lives and all their love. She had been an excellent wife to him, and had grieved for him when he died. But this was different. Her boy—her treasure—to lose Guss was to lose everything. The child that had come to her when she had given up all idea that she should look into baby eyes that were her own, ever hear baby babble that would grow plainer and more plain till the word mother would come full-shaped, and make her heart bound as she clasped the speaker to her breast. Her beautiful, brave boy, so good, so clever, and so kind!

She brought from her secret hoards, from amid her very choicest treasures, little playthings that had been his when a child; broken toys, ships that ran on wheels, and leaden soldiers. From the innermost recesses of her treasure trunks she produced a little pair of socks, the first she had ever knitted for him, knitted in happy anticipation of his birth. She remembered how she had smiled and feared when knitting them; she remembered the pleasure she had experienced

when putting them on the little rosy feet, and his delight at their bright colours; how he had pushed them out for everyone to see, and how he had tried to get at them to suck them.

She sat with the tears raining down her face as she regarded these little socks, faded and in holes; they seemed to shadow forth his loss; the little worn out socks were as a token to her that her boy was gone for ever, her beautiful, brave boy. "Oh, Guss, Guss," she wailed, "to think that you are taken, and I am left."

The staircase at the "Quarries" was lighted by a large window, in which was a fixed seat with cushions on it. The window was in a recess raised a step higher than the landing. Here Mrs. Tarleton would sit watching for the postman, who walked thither from Chippington. At first Seton had written every day, then less frequently, then he did not write at all. Mrs. Tarleton sat in the window day by day waiting. The postman, who at first had been most active in hastening on his round to bring letters to the "Quarries," now slunk by, or left his letters without daring to look up; he knew her eye was on him, and he feared he was the bearer of no good news. Gladys would sometimes run out to

meet him, but nothing now ever came from Seton.

They could not understand it; and Mrs. Tarleton began to think Seton was somehow to blame in the whole affair. She said hardly anything, eat and drank in silence, sat in the great window, fed and cleaned her parrots, gave out the stores, knitted and went to bed. Each day she grew more silent, spoke less and less to Gladys. Once in a way she would say, "I do not understand it," and repeat that sentence as though answering herself.

Gladys had no key to the mystery; she was miserable enough on her own account, but it was dreadful to her to feel that Aunt Mary seemed to blame Seton and herself; still she was as brave as she could be, and sought to be a comfort to her aunt, who she knew was suffering terribly.

No news, no news; Gladys searched the columns of the "Times" hoping each day to find something, but there seemed to be no more to say about the lost "Irresolute." She knew the address of Guss' friend at the Admiralty, and she summoned courage to write to him. He answered at once that he was very sorry to say there was no further news; he still had hopes;

orders had been sent to search among the islands near where the "Irresolute" had been lost, but months must elapse before they heard the result of these explorations.

This was all; and Mrs. Tarleton seemed cross with Gladys for having written. She associated the wreck with Seton's not writing, and Gladys with Seton. Poor old lady, she was so utterly broken down by her trouble that she was hardly responsible for her behaviour. She got quite a mania into her head that if Gladys had preferred Guss to Seton this thing would never have happened; now Guss was wrecked, and Seton did not write—these things jumbled together in her mind till she began to dislike the sight of Gladys; all she did was wrong. Mrs. Tarleton now hardly opened her lips at all to Gladys, but her looks made her niece very miserable; all was wretched for Gladys—Guss wrecked, her aunt quite altered to her, and Seton . . . . she knew not what of him, she wrote and wrote, but there was no reply. "He must be gone in search of Guss," she thought; "but why had he not written to her of his intention."

Her suspense was put an end to at last by the letter Elinor wrote from the Piccadilly Hotel.

She read and re-read this letter—here was the reason Seton had not written, he was too ill to write. Should she tell her aunt all about it, and so exonerate Seton from blame in not writing, or should she keep it all secret and not add fresh sorrow to the misery her aunt was already overladen with? She wished she had some one to advise her. It was certain she must go to London.

At last she consulted her aunt's old servant, Ruth, who agreed with her in thinking this fresh calamity had better be kept from her mistress, and she undertook to arrange all about the going to London.

Mrs. Tarleton looked on this desertion of herself, as she called it to Ruth, as all of a piece with Seton's treason—"Let her go to Mrs. Wren and amuse herself in London while I wait here."

Ruth did not repeat these words to Gladys, but was very tender over her, packed her things, and went with her to the station; she saw her safe off in the lady's carriage, and she gave the guard half-a-crown of her own money to see to her.

Elinor was at the station, and took her off to the Piccadilly Hotel.

John was still head waiter at the Piccadilly;

indeed, it would hardly have been the Piccadilly without John, for he had been part and parcel of that institution for so many years that the West country people would have felt quite aggrieved had he not been there to welcome them.

John of course knew all about Mrs. Wren, and her relationship to Seton, and he had easily learnt from her maid that the Miss Clifford expected was the young lady Mr. Herold was engaged to. This news he had retailed in Remington Place, and there he had heard of the strange behaviour of Mrs. Wren. He was much disgusted with such treatment of his relative, but he was too much of a disciplinarian to show anything but profound respect to Mrs. Wren in her character of patroness of the hotel. He kept his public manners quite apart from his private feelings; probably the inner John would have liked to cork the lady's sherry, but the outer John considered the credit of the house.

When Elinor and Gladys drove up to the private entrance of the hotel, John was in the hall. He came forward to assist at the alighting, partly from natural politeness due to a lady, however ill she may have behaved, partly as repre-

senting the Piccadilly Hotel, and principally out of curiosity to see Gladys. The porter opened the cab door, and John presented his fore-arm for the ladies to lean on. Mrs. Wren got out in her usual stately manner, and passed into the hall; then Gladys descended. She looked so sad, and yet so lovely, that John's heart was quite touched, and he could not help saying to her—

"I have just heard that Mr. 'Erold is better, Miss Clifford." This was true, as he had but now returned from looking in on his cousins, and such had been the report of Seton.

Gladys thanked him so sweetly that John became her devoted slave. At dinner he came into their sitting room several times, himself bringing up dishes usually served by inferior waiters.

Having thus had an opportunity of cementing his good opinion of Gladys, he, directly he was off duty for the night, went straight to Remington Place and told all he knew, with many praises of Gladys.

So next day when Mrs. Wren and her companion arrived, Mrs. Filters and Emma knew very well who the young lady was, and all about her.

John's report of Seton had been quite correct, he was rather better, and since that report had been made he had passed a good night; but still he was by no means out of danger.

When Gladys saw him lying there a mere shadow, she hardly knew him, and he quite failed to recognize her.

Emma watched the meeting with hungry, jealous eyes. Mrs. Wren she detested, and, in spite of John's glowing description of Gladys, she saw in her only the girl who stood between Seton and herself. She found it impossible to deny her loveliness, but this only made her feel the more jealous. Besides, she was angry with her; why had she left Seton all this time, why only come to him at this late hour? It did not occur to her that she was ignorant of his illness; she thought she must have known of it somehow. She felt that had it not been for herself and her mother, Gladys would never have seen him alive again. Was she to come in now and reap the fruits of her care and love? At the same time she knew she was unfair: even if Gladys had heard of his illness she could not have known how very bad he was; that sorrow-stricken, fragile girl could not be hard-hearted. Above

all, Emma knew her love was vain—whatever happened she had no hope for herself; so, in spite of her jealousy, and to satisfy her own conscience, she determined to do her duty, not only by Seton, but by Gladys too.

Gladys after a while noted the constant presence of Emma, and wondered who she was. Then she remembered Seton's confession. She was sitting on one side of the bed and Emma on the other. Seton turned his head wearily towards Emma, and murmured something; she gave him a spoonful of a drink, and smoothed his pillow; soon after he fell asleep. Gladys felt this turning towards Emma deeply; oh, why had she not been with him from the first? Here was another filling her place, and ministering to him; he did not even know her, and he turned from her to another for help and support. It was very hard to bear.

When he had fallen asleep, Emma motioned that they had better leave, and Mrs. Wren and Gladys went into the drawing-room till the doctor came.

Mr. Maler, after seeing Seton sleeping, gave his opinion that three days more would decide the case; till then they must wait and watch.

"Could not I remain near him?" said Gladys to Elinor, when the doctor was gone.

"Unfortunately I offended the woman of the house, or we could have had rooms here; there are no decent lodgings to be had anywhere in reach, I have tried all round the place."

"I think, if you don't mind, I should like to ask if they would give me a room; I must be near him."

"Well, you can try, I can't, but that is no reason you shouldn't if you like. The doctor tells me they are most respectable people; evidently those stories were untrue; you heard something, I daresay?"

"I heard everything there was to tell, Seton told me."

"Oh!"

As they were speaking, a tap came to the door, and Emma entered.

"I have come, Mrs. Wren, to say that my mother will be happy to receive you and Miss Clifford here till Mr. Herold is out of danger, if you would like to remain."

With Seton in such a critical state, Mrs. Wren put her pride in her pocket, and accepted the invitation which had been fought for so stoutly by

Emma that her mother had been forced to give way, though sorely against her will. Good-natured woman though she was, Mrs. Wren's conduct had so deeply wounded her, it took much time to get over it.

That night, Gladys, Emma, and Seton were all under one roof.

CHAPTER XIX.

MARINA.

THE duty of nursing Seton was now shared between Gladys, Emma and Mrs. Wren. Emma had been so good to Seton that Gladys felt very grateful to her, and choked down her feelings when he turned to her for aid. Seton never recognised either Gladys or Elinor, he only knew Emma.

Gradually Emma softened to the fair girl who held in her keeping that heart she had hoped would be her own. Thrown together hour by hour, she began to sympathize with one even more full of sorrow than herself. Gladys was nearly heart-broken—blow upon blow had struck her; she was usually light and buoyant, but her feelings were very deep, and Aunt Mary had struck at these hard and sharply. Now here was Seton looking all but dead, with no eye for her, no ear for her voice, no knowledge of her presence. No one had ever before been harsh to her, and if Seton died she had no friend left in all the world.

The sight of her wretchedness, of her all but utter hopelessness, made Emma stronger; by nature she was of a harder fibre, able to stand buffeting and beating better than Gladys; she had passed through her ordeal. The man who lay so nearly at death's door could never be anything to her; if he recovered he would go away, and, in all probability, she would never see him more. And it would be better that it should be so—it would be better that they did not meet again, she thought. Or he might die and so be lost to both of them. Emma schooled herself to meet either event; she conquered even her jealousy.

Mr. Maler came and went; there was nothing to be done, nature alone could aid them; Seton was young and naturally healthy, but the fever had possession of him still, and he was very weak. This relapse was even worse than the original illness.

Sarncombe and Harriet came up and saw Seton, but he did not know them; it was still only Emma whom he recognized. Hodges came up alone, as Dora was unfit to leave home; this estimable man thought it a fit time to relate his wrongs to Elinor, Harriet, and Sarncombe. He took an early dinner with them, and afterwards

detailed what had taken place between Seton and himself about the trust money. He told them that owing to Seton's carelessness he and his were left well nigh stranded on the shores of worldly trouble; that he and his, Dora and her offspring, were brought very low, and were sorely afflicted. How Seton, a man of business, could have permitted him to trust solely to Garston he could not comprehend, it was very blameable.

The three listeners were astounded at the effrontery of the man, while he seemed to think himself a subject for the deepest sympathy. Seton lay dying in the next room, and he was urging his imaginary wrongs against the dying man to that man's sisters!

Sarncombe replied to him: "I think this is hardly an opportunity for discussing Seton and his conduct; but, as you have introduced the subject, I must say that I do not think, even on your own showing, he is in any way responsible, at least, not as a gentleman and a man of honour; what the law of the land, as you call it, may say, I don't know; but I do know it would be uncommonly bad form of you to kick up a row about the matter, seeing it was you and Dora who overpersuaded him to do it."

"But are we, are our babes, to suffer for his want of prudence?"

"It will be time enough to talk of your babes some years hence—they don't want money now, only tops and bottoms and that sort of thing."

"You know little of their wants as you have not been blessed as we have; Seton probably wronged us unwittingly, but he is not the less liable, and we are bound to protect our offspring."

"Don't you think," said Harriet, "that instead of worrying about poor Seton, you had better go and hunt up Mr. Garston, as he must have done the wrong to you and your babes wittingly?"

"How Jane could have married that man," put in Elinor, anxious to turn the subject, "I cannot conceive—a low, vulgar, attorney. We had trouble enough to keep him at a distance—a very vulgar, pushing man indeed."

Hodges endeavoured to bring back the conversation to his wrongs, but Sarncombe stopped him: "Come, Hodges, don't begin that all over again, it can do no good to discuss it at present; have the decency to wait till we know how it is to be with poor Seton."

"I'm sure I don't wish to say more upon the

subject at present. But I thought, as we were all together, it was a good time to speak about a thing that must be arranged some time or other. You have lost no money, you should have a little feeling for others. Your day of adversity may come—I trust it is far away; but remember, it is more meet to raise those that are fallen than to consider them out of season when performing a conscientious duty. My humble desire is to be at peace with all men, to preserve the even tenor of my way, and pursue my most responsible calling, sustained by the good opinion of my brethren; but I cannot let my children's bread be devoured by others." With this beautiful peroration, Hodges took another glass of wine, bid the party farewell, and returned to Dora and his babes.

"By George, the beggar is worse than Garston," said Sarncombe as soon as his brother-in-law had shut the door. Garston is an open scoundrel, Hodges is . . . . by George, he beats everything."

"Poor Dora," said Harriet, "what a mess she has made of it."

"It all comes of marrying out of one's own station," said Elinor. To this Harriet and her

husband agreed; then the former said—"I will go and relieve Gladys a bit. Who is the tall dark girl that helps nurse? is she a daughter of the woman who lets the lodgings?"

Elinor told the Sarncombes the whole story, and the awful mistake she had made, also of Mrs. Filters' good-heartedness in so far forgiving her, and entertaining them.

"By George, she is a brick," said Sarncombe. When is Wren coming up?"

"He has been up, and is coming up again to-morrow, I expect. Now Harriet, will you go in?"

While this was going on in Mrs. Filters' drawing-room, there had been a scene of a very different description in the bedroom where Seton was lying. While Seton's nearest relatives had been eating and drinking while they discussed him, Gladys and Emma had made friends. It was the all-important day when things must mend or the patient be worn out; the change would come between two and three in the night.

While the others were dining and conversing, Gladys, fatigued with watching, had fallen asleep. She did not sleep very long, and when she awoke she found Emma had come round from the other side of the bed, and was standing close

by looking at her. She started, and glanced towards the bed; Seton was lying there, just as he had lain through all those hours, occasionally moving feverishly, and murmuring unintelligible things. Then she looked up at Emma, and Emma knelt down by her side, and said very gently in her ear—"I feel so much for you, Miss Clifford, I only heard to-day about the 'Irresolute,' and all."

Gladys looked very piteously at her, and her eyes brimmed over. "It is almost more than I can bear," she said, and her lips quivered.

Emma put her arm round her, and Gladys cried silently, with her head upon Emma's shoulder; the bright sunny hair mixed with her dark locks, and Emma wept in sympathy, their tears flowed together for their common trouble. "Don't be downhearted," whispered Emma, "God may spare him to you yet."

In the evening Mr. Maler came, and left orders that if any change took place, he was to be called immediately; and he gave instructions to Mrs. Filters to have ready strong beef tea, and such other things as might possibly be wanted when the fever left the patient.

Mrs. Filters was in much trouble, and was only too glad to have something to bustle about and

see to. She would not go into the sick room for fear of encountering Mrs. Wren, whom she had not forgiven. She was behaving very generously —she had given up her whole household to the Herold family, allowed them to come and go, eat and drink, just as they would—but meet Mrs. Wren she would not. She was very sorry for Seton, and she pitied that poor little Miss Clifford; she went to much trouble and expense, suffered considerable inconvenience—but she could not forget the language that had been used to her. She was very lonely, for now Emma had no time to give her—she was always nursing, or, when off duty, too tired to talk, and prone to fall asleep. The house was turned inside out by strangers, one of whom had insulted her, and the maid of this one sat in her kitchen nearly all day, thus preventing her gossiping with her own cook, which would have been a pastime and a comfort to her. She sat in her parlour and looked at the portrait of Nehemiah, almost wishing he was back again. The doctor's orders had given her something to do, so she set to work on the beef-tea and the jelly—the lady's maid was gone to bed, so she could get about her kitchen in comfort.

Elinor and Harriet had gone to lie down, leaving Emma and Gladys to see to Seton. It was thought advisable for Emma, as chief nurse, to be on duty at the critical hour, and Gladys had very gently, but very primly, said she would sit up with Emma.

Twelve o'clock had struck from all the neighbouring steeples, and Gladys, whose young eyes were heavy, afraid of falling asleep, looked round for something to read—at any rate something just to hold in her hand.

Upon the table in the room lay Seton's papers, just as they had been brought from Winchcom Street. Among them was the packet that had been sent from Ralph Lacy. From this packet one paper had got detached, and lay somewhat apart. It was just two sheets of foolscap folded, and endorsed on the outside— "'Marina: a Legend of the Capo delle Croce,' sent to Seton Herold by his dear friend, Ralph Lacy." Lifting this, and glancing her eye over its contents, Gladys took it back with her to her seat by Seton's bed. Then she fell into a reverie—she remembered much about Ralph—Seton had often talked of him. She did not know that he was dead, she only knew he was a dear friend

of Seton's. The clocks struck again, Seton still lay as before; then she opened the sheets of foolscap and read the following:—

"MARINA:

"A LEGEND OF THE CAPO DELLE CROCE."

"Through the olive woods that crown
Delle Mele's wooded height,
Shoot declining rays of day
Pouring through in floods of light.

"Alassio's tow'rs and turrets strong,
Upward rais'd against the sky;
In nearer distance sharper give,
Outlines quaint and shadowy.

"Gentle breezes now are swelling
Many a fisher's glist'ning sail;
Blessings on the Saint Pietro,
For the cool and fav'ring gale.

"While thus the sea the breeze is gently cresting,
It's grateful breath is also felt on land;
Cools many a limb that now from work is resting,
With the sweet gale the toiler's brow is fann'd:
Plays lightly next among the leaves, and steals
From many a graceful flower
Its perfume sweet, and passing onward with
The odoriferous dower
Pauses where, 'neath the shady grove,
The youths and maidens pour
From out their eyes those looks of love,
Forgotten never more.

"The fairest of the group—Marina—now is singing,
A song of love, sweet but yet melancholy;
The evening sky above a heav'nly glow is flinging
Upon her face, so beautiful and holy.

SONG.

"'The rose it blooms, and is sweet,
The stream it flows, and is fair;
But the flower dies at our feet,
The water is drunk by the air.

"'The air is warm, and is bright,
The sea with ripples is gay;
But storms will arise in their might,
Driving beauty and gladness away.

"'Love that is born of the sky
Lives with angels for ever;
But alas! on earth it must die,
Truest hearts even must sever.

"'Peacefulness holds now her reign
Over this beautiful earth;
But soon will the storms come again
And banish all gladness and mirth.'"

* * *

"Mournfully thus the cadence fell,
On the ears of the list'ners—gay till then,
Like an olden prophecy of ill,
Chilling the hearts of maidens and men.

"Ended the strain; but its mournful tone
Has quickly invaded every breast;
Lorenzo's arm is round her thrown,
As Marina tarries behind the rest.

"'Wherefore so sadly sings my love?
My love, what has chanced to thee—
That tears in crystal torrents flow
Down thy cheeks so rapidly?

"Does not the time approach e'en now,
When 'neath our vineyard's tranquil shade,
Together joined by church and love,
Lorenzo and his own sweet maid,
Will pass their youth and age away,
And part no more till life decay?

"'Nay, cheer thee, my bride, and a sweet good-night,
May holy angels send thee visions bright.

"'And wherefore—whither—why so soon good-night?
Must thou leave land and home—and me—to-night?"

"'I must away from shore to-night,
The fav'ring breeze my sail must fill;
But my return with morning light,
My love shall see from Croce's hill.
Good-night, beloved, may thy rest
Be sweet, and may thy dreams be blest.'

PART II.

"On Santa Croce's lofty head,
At early dawn Marina stood;
Many a sail was bending now,
Homeward o'er the glittering flood.

"In splendour rises up the sun,
Proceeding to his throne on high;
Till, in midday pomp and glory,
He sits—the ruler of the sky.

"Then no lingering sail is seen
On all that boundless, silent, sea;
But still Marina on the cliff,
Keeps watch, and gazes steadfastly.

"Earth in adoration turning
To the great lord of life and light,
Brings on the evening and the morning,
And succeeding day and night.

"Ever Marina from the cliff is gazing,
Over the roaring or the tranquil sea—
Ever the sails, that to the land are nearing,
Bring disappointment and fresh misery.

"Thus, month upon month has perished,
Heavily roll the days along;
Till years have pass'd since that fair evening
Listened to Marina's song.

"The air is warm and is bright,
The sea with ripples is gay;
But storms will arise in their might,
Driving beauty and gladness away.

"The Capo delle Croce still rears its lofty head,
And Marina's spirit still sleeps not like other dead;
But ever on Croce's cliff at still night or at busy day,
Marina's spirit watches for the lover that pass'd away."

Gladys had begun reading the lines almost mechanically—paying little attention to what she read; her spirit was very weary. Gradually, as she went on, she grew more interested, and at last, as she finished, she found herself repeating—

"The air is warm and is bright,
The sea with ripples is gay;
But storms will arise in their might,
Driving beauty and gladness away."

How fit they seemed—how appropriate to her feelings: her youth and love had been so glad and bright—her life had seemed so full of warmth; now, the storms had arisen, and all was nearly gone—the flowers were faded, and the stream was dry.

The clock struck two, and she started from her reverie. Emma was regarding Seton intently. Gladys leant forward, and looked eagerly at him. There was a change—the fever had left him. He opened his eyes and saw Gladys. Faintly uttering her name, he smiled, and turned his head towards her.

At last he recognized her; it was her turn now. Seton no longer looked to Emma; the fever had quitted him—he knew, and turned to her.

Emma left the room to fetch the beef tea, and sent for Mr. Maler.

Gladys knelt down and kissed Seton, and he smiled on her. The crisis was past—his life was spared; she would not, like "Marina," watch in vain for that which never more would come.

END OF VOL. II.









